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There's One
In Every Family

There's One In Every Family

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ROOF SITTER

F ROM THE VERY BEGINNING

there were two things wrong with my brother Joe. He was shy and he was stubborn. This is the way he did. If somebody tried to make him not shy, then he got stubborn. Like the time when he was only four years old and he was supposed to be a butterfly in the Sunday school entertainment, and Miss Wilson tried and tried to push Joe out on the stage and make him flutter his wings, but he lay down on the floor and wouldn't get up no matter how much the other butterflies stepped on him.

And when he started to kindergarten and his teacher kept asking him to come up in front and tell the other children about his pets, Joe ran out of the room and hid downstairs in the boys' toilet until they had to call the janitor to get him out.

My mother had tried her best to make Joe not like he was, but when he was six years old she had to give up. She said she hoped he would outgrow it. And she asked Joe's teacher please not to try to draw Joe out any more because of the way it made him act. So after that everybody left him alone.

One morning in June just after school was out we got a telegram from Nashville saying that my father's Aunt Sadie was in a dying condition, and for them to come quick. At first my mother didn't know what to do, because



He was shy

she knew they wouldn't want any children there, and there wasn't anybody to leave us with. But she thought a while, and then all of a sudden she said, "Sarah Blevins."

"Who is that?" I asked. I was standing there watching my mother.

"She is a college student," said my mother. "She is Mrs. White down the street's niece, and she is staying with her and earning her way through college by taking care of children and things like that this summer."

So my mother hurried down to Mrs. White's house, and I went too, and Mrs. White was out in the yard, and

she said that Sarah Blevins would be glad to take care of us while my mother and father were gone. "She is very good with children," Mrs. White said. "She has had some courses in child training at the university and she



Sarah Blevins was a tall, skinny girl with glasses on and a serious look knows all about them. She will try out some new ideas on your children."

Then Mrs. White called Sarah Blevins out and she was a tall skinny girl with glasses on and a serious look. She told my mother that she would be glad to stay with us, and would give us the best of care. "How old are these children?" Sarah Blevins asked, looking at me, and stretching her mouth a little like a smile.

"This is Helen," my mother said. "She is nine. And Joe, her little brother, is nearly six."

"Oh, that's very fortunate," Sarah Blevins said, "because I have just finished a course in the child from six to

twelve years, and that includes both of your children."

"Yes," my mother said. "But please be careful with little Joe. He is a very shy child, and doesn't like to be noticed. As long as he's left alone though, he's very nice. Just so you don't try to draw him into the limelight."

Sarah Blevins looked interested. "I'm very good on behavior problems," she said. "I will try to adjust your little boy. I have done a lot of field work on problem children."

My mother looked worried. "Oh, there's nothing wrong with Joe," she said. "He's just a little young for his age. If you let him alone he'll be all right."

"I'm sure we'll get along splendidly together," said Sarah Blevins, stretching her mouth at me again. She went into her aunt's house and came out with her clothes in a little bag, and we all hurried back to our house because my mother had to meet my father in town and catch the one o'clock train.

When we got to our yard Joe was playing under the sweet-gum tree. He had some rocks and little sticks, and when he saw Sarah Blevins he stared at her for a minute and went on playing.

"This is Joe," said my mother in a hurry. "Jocy, this is Sarah Blevins. She is going to take care of you while mother is gone, and you must be a good little boy and do what she says." Then my mother went into the house to get ready.

Joe stared at Sarah Blevins again, and then he began to hammer a stick into the ground with a rock. Sarah Blevins went over to Joe and held out her hand. "How do you do, Joe," she said.

Joe began to look nervous. He twisted his head around so he couldn't see her, but she kept on holding her hand out for him to shake. When she saw he wasn't going to shake hands with her, finally she put her hand down. She looked at the sticks and the rocks he was playing with.

"Oh, a house," she said. "Joe is building a nice house. Who will live in your house when it is built? Is it a fairy house? Will a tiny fairy live in it?"

Joe put his arm up and hid his face. Then he went over and stood behind a bush where Sarah Blevins couldn't see him. All you could see was a picce of his head.

"He doesn't like for people to talk to him," I told Sarah Blevins. "Just the family. He's shy of people."

Sarah Blevins looked a little mad. "Yes, but that's very wrong to encourage him in it," she said. "That way he'll get conditioned and then it will be hopeless. He should be drawn out."

"He doesn't like to be drawn out," I told her. "That just makes him worse."

"Not if it's done right," she said. She began to pretend that she didn't know where Joe was. "There was a little boy here a minute ago," she said. "Where did he go? Maybe he had on a pair of magic shoes, or maybe he changed into a flower or a butterfly?"

Joe heard what she was saying and he squatted down quickly behind the bush. He tried to crawl into it, but it was full of stickers.

Just then my mother came out of the house with her hat on. She kissed me good-bye. "Joe is behind the bush," I told her.

My mother went over and kissed him good-bye. "Be a good boy," she told him. "Good-bye," she said to Sarah Blevins. "I know you're going to be fine with the children. Just take charge of things, and order what you need from the grocery. We'll be back by Wednesday at least."

Then she got into the taxi and rode away.

It seemed very lonely without her. Sarah Blevins stood still a minute, then she said, "I will just leave your little brother alone for the time being." And she took her bag and we went into the house and I showed her where to put her things.

After a while, when she had looked in the icebox to see what food there was, she got a piece of note paper and began to write on it. She told me she was writing out what for me to do every hour of the day and beginning tomorrow I must do exactly what it said. She stuck the paper on the kitchen door with some thumbtacks.

"Now you must take care of everything for a few minutes," she said. "I am going to run down to the grocery store and get some celery. Your little brother seems to be lacking in iron."

While she was gone I went out and hunted for Joe. He was digging holes in the back yard.

"Is she gone yet?" he asked. I knew he meant Sarah Blevins.

"She is gone, but she is coming back in a minute," I told him. "She has gone to get something for you to eat to give you iron."

"I don't want iron," Joe said.

"But listen, Joe," I told him. "She is supposed to take

care of us, and we are supposed to mind her while mother and father are away. So don't be stubborn. Do what she says, and maybe they will bring us something nice."

"I don't like her," Joe said.

I didn't know what else to say to Joe. I could see that he was going to be stubborn, but I didn't know how to make him not be.

Pretty soon I could hear Sarah Blevins in the kitchen fixing the supper, and after a while she called us in to eat it.

It was mostly lamb chops and celery and carrots with nothing for dessert. All through supper Sarah Blevins talked to Joe. She asked him things like did he like furry kittens, and did he ever see a brownie, and things like that. But Joe was so hungry that he didn't hide anywhere. He would take a bite of whatever it was, and then he would put his head under the table to chew it so he wouldn't have to look at Sarah Blevins. And just as soon as he got through eating he went into the living room and turned on the radio to the Krunchy Krispy Kiddies hour and I went in there too, and we listened to it.

It had got to the place where the twins had sailed to the moon in their rocket ship and found the palace of King Zoozag, the moon king. While the twins were looking around for the moon pearl, King Zoozag's magician had caught them and locked them up in a dungeon with a ceiling that kept coming down closer and closer to crush the twins to pieces. It was very exciting. The roof was just above their heads and you could hear it giving awful creaks, and you could hear the king laughing an

awful laugh, hahahaha, when all of a sudden Sarah Blevins came rushing in there looking like she was going to faint. She ran over and turned off the radio.

"My goodness," she said. She sat down in a chair and got her breath. "No wonder," she said. "No wonder your little brother has got a complex if your mother lets him listen to such things as that. Especially at night."

Joe had been sitting up close to the radio listening with his mouth open, but when Sarah Blevins turned it off, he turned around and stared at her with his mouth still open.

"Now," Sarah Blevins said, after a minute, in a cheerful voice. "Let's tell stories. Shall we? First I'll tell a story, then Helen will tell one and then Joe will. Or maybe Joe would tell his first."

Joe kept looking at her for just a minute, and then he shook his head. But Sarah Blevins paid no attention to that. "Joe's going to tell us a story, Helen," she said. "Won't that be nice? I wish Joe would tell us a story about a little white rabbit. Don't you?"

"Yes, but he won't," I told her. "He doesn't like to talk before people."

"Oh, yes, Joe will. I know he will," Sarah Blevins said. She gave me a kind of a mad look. "Joe will tell us a story."

Joe put his head down in a corner of the chair, and pulled a cushion over it.

"You see," I said. "He won't."

"Shhhh," hissed Sarah Blevins, frowning at me. "Yes he will," she said out loud. "Just as soon as he thinks



Joc put his head down in a corner of the chair and pulled a cushion over it awhile he will. Let's be quiet and let him think. Oh, what a nice story Joe is going to tell us."

For a little while we were quiet and Joe didn't take his head out.

"Now," Sarah Blevins said finally. "Now I think Joe is ready to begin. But where is Joc?" she asked in a surprised voice. "Why, he was here just a minute ago. Where can he be? Is he behind the radio?" She went over there and looked. "No, he's not there. Is he behind the door? No." Then she went over to the chair where Joe was and lifted up the cushion. "Why *here* he is."

But before she could say anything else Joe slid out of the chair and ran upstairs.

"I guess he's going to hide in the bathroom," I told Sarah Blevins. "Sometimes he does that when ladies bother him because they can't go in there after him."

Sarah went to the foot of the stairs. "Joe's sleepy," she said in a loud voice. "I guess he wants to go to bed. He will tell us a story tomorrow. Goodnight, Joe."

Then she came back and sat down in the living room. She looked sort of mad. "Helen," she said, "you must keep quiet when I'm talking to Joe. What's wrong with him now is that he's heard people say he's shy so much that he thinks he is shy. So he acts shy. He isn't really shy, he only thinks he is. When he withdraws like this you must pretend it's just a game he's playing, or you must explain it to him like I did just now and make it reasonable. Have I made it clear to you? Do you understand?"

"I don't know if I do or not," I said.

"Well, it doesn't matter. Just so you keep quiet and let me manage your little brother my own way. By the time your mother comes back I'll have him adjusted. But you must co-operate."

"All right," I told her. Because it would be nice and my mother would be glad if she got home and Joe was talking to people and not running from them any more, and not being stubborn and singing little songs when they asked him to, and making speeches and things like that. So I would do like Sarah Blevins said, and be quiet and pretend I didn't know why he was hiding.

The next morning we had breakfast and I looked on the note paper to see what I was supposed to do. I was supposed to do Household Tasks for a half an hour. Sarah Blevins told me to go upstairs and make up my bed and then come down and play outdoors until lunch.

So I went up and I began to clean up the bedroom, and I looked out of the window and saw Joe playing in the front yard. He had some marbles and he was putting them in a row on the grass.

Pretty soon I saw Sarah Blevins coming out there and she had some papers in her hands. "Hello, Joe," she said. She sat down on the grass beside him.

"May I play with you?" she asked, stretching her mouth into a smile at him.

Joe looked down at the ground and began to pick up the marbles one at a time. He would not look at Sarah Blevins.

"Would you like to play a game that I have here?" Sarah Blevins said. She put one of the papers down on the grass. "It's a game with pictures. Look. It's fun. Do you want to play it with me?"

Joe began to shake his head. He began to slide away from her a little toward the bush.

"See the little girl in the picture," Sarah Blevins told him, holding it up. "She is rolling a hoop. But something is missing. Can you take the red pencil and put in what is missing?"

Joe kept shaking his head and Sarah kept holding out the pencil to him. Finally Joe got up and ran to the bush and hid behind it. But Sarah went over there too and sat down. "It's nicer over here, isn't it, Joe?" she said. "Let's don't play that game then, let's play another one. Listen."

She took another piece of paper and began to read off of it.

"The sun was shining on the sea, shining with all

its might.' Can you say that, Joe? Listen: 'The sun was shining on the sea, shining with all its might.' Now you say it."

But Joe began to look more nervous than ever, and he went around to the other side of the bush, and Sarah followed him around there. She kept on talking. "This is fun, isn't it, Joe?" she said. "It's like a game I know called Follow the Leader. Did you ever play that game?"

Joe began to look kind of wild. He looked for another place to hide. There wasn't any. He ran toward the front porch, but I guess he thought that wouldn't be any good, and all of a sudden he started climbing up the rose trellis. There weren't many roses on it, and it was kind of like a ladder. He went half way up and then he turned his head around to see if Sarah was coming.

This time she did not follow him. But anyway he climbed on higher until he got up to the porch roof, and then he crawled up on it and sat there and looked down at Sarah Blevins.

I spread up the bed in a hurry and went on downstairs and out into the yard to where they were. I wanted to see what Sarah was going to do next to adjust Joe.

Sarah was standing there on the ground looking up at the roof. Her face was red and she looked sort of mad, but she laughed and said to me, "Did you see Joe go up the trellis? He's playing that he's a little squirrel, I guess. Did you see him climb?"

"Yes," I said. I was not going to say anything else, because I was supposed to co-operate with her and keep quiet.



Joe crawled up on the porch roof and sat there

"I wonder how a little squirrel comes down off a roof," Sarah Blevins said. "Can you show us, Joe?"

We waited about ten minutes, but Joe did not come down. He went over and sat down behind the chimney. We could just see his legs and a piece of his blouse.

Then I forgot. "We could get the stepladder and get him down that way," I told Sarah Blevins. She gave me an awful mad look.

"Be quiet," she said under her breath. Then she said in a loud voice, "Why, we don't want to get a little squirrel down with a ladder. He will come down himself in a little while to get some nuts."

"Or maybe he thinks he's a bird," I said.

But Sarah Blevins didn't pay any attention to me. "I'm going to fix your lunch now, and when I get back I wouldn't be surprised if Joe is on the ground playing with you, Helen," she said. "Being a squirrel is fun, but after all it's nicer to be a little boy, isn't it?" And she took the papers and things and went into the house.

I sat down on the ground and looked up at Joe.

After a while I said, "Sarah Blevins has gone inside now, Joe. Why don't you come down off of the roof and surprise her?"

Joe got from behind the chimney. "No," he said. After a minute he asked, "When is she going home?"

"Maybe not till next Wednesday," I said. "So come on down and do what she says. We're supposed to."

"I'll come down next Wednesday," Joe said.

I could see that he was going to be stubborn and not come down off of the roof, and then Sarah Blevins

couldn't adjust him before mother came back. I didn't know what to do, so I just sat there and tried to think of something.

After a while some children from the next block came skating along the sidewalk. "What are you doing, Helen?" they asked.

"Nothing," I told them. "Only sitting here waiting for my little brother Joe to come down off of the roof."

They came up in the yard and looked up at Joe's face, which was sticking over.

"What is he doing up there?" they asked.

"Just waiting. He's going to sit there until next Wednesday."

Just then an automobile with two men in it came driving slowly along the street. The men looked out at us and stopped the car. A fat one stuck his head out of the window. "Hey, kids," he said. "Having a big time with school out and everything?"

"Yes sir," we said.

"Well sir, how would you like to have your pictures on the Kiddies' Vacation page of the *Morning Journal* so all the other kids all over the city can see what fun you're having? Would you like that?"

"Yes sir," we told him.

So they got out of the car and the thin one had a camera. The fat one told us to stand in a row with our hands on each other's shoulders and pretend that we were skating. One of the other children said, "Hey, mister, can Joe be in the picture?"

"Sure, sure," the fat man said. "Who is Joe, your dog?"

"No," I told him. "He's my little brother. He's up there." I pointed up at the roof.

"Sure, Joe can be in it," the fat man said. "Hold everything, Bill," he said to the man with the camera. "Come on down, Joe," he said.

"He can't be in the picture if he has to come down to be in it," I told the man. "He's going to stay up there all the rest of this week and some more too."

"Ha, ha," laughed the fat man. "That's a new one, ain't it. All over town they're sitting in trees, but he's the first roof sitter. Well, I'll tell you what. We wouldn't want Joe to spoil his record, so we'll take a picture of him from the ground. The rest of you can stand around and be looking up at Joe. We'll give him some free publicity."

So we all stood around and pointed up at the roof, and the camcraman clicked the picture so quick that Joe couldn't hide his face or do anything about it. Then the man asked us our names and how old we were, what grades at school we were in, and then they got in their car and drove away. And the children from the next block hurried home to tell thcir mothers about having their pictures taken. And just then Sarah Blevins came to the door and said lunch was ready. "We have peanut butter sandwiches, Helen," she said. "Maybe Joe will come down and get some."

But he didn't. I went in and sat down at the table.

"A man took our pictures," I told Sarah Blevins.

But she didn't pay any attention. I guess she was thinking what to do next to adjust Joe. When we finished lunch she said we would just let Joe alone until he got hungry,

and she put the dishes to soak and sat down and began to read a magazine.

I went outside and stayed in the front yard. So the afternoon went by and it was beginning to get dark, and after a while it was really dark, and still Joe was on the roof.

I went in the house to see if supper was ready and to ask Sarah Blevins what she was going to do.

"It's dark," I said, "and Joe is still up on the roof. He still won't come down."

"Go out and tell him that supper is ready," said Sarah Blevins. "But don't tell him to come down. He must decide that for himself. He must make up his own mind what he is going to do. If I make him come down now, everything will be ruined."

So I went out and told Joe supper was ready. "Don't you want any?" I asked him.

His voice sounded very weak and far away. "No," he said.

"Are you going to sleep up there?" I asked him.

"Yes," he said, and he sounded scared and stubborn at the same time.

I went back and told Sarah Blevins. "Very well," she said.

So we ate supper and it was bedtime, and I went upstairs. I went to the window of my mother and father's bedroom. The moon was shining and I could look down on the porch roof and see Joe, sitting up close to the chimney.

"Are you awake, Joe?" I asked him.

"Yes," his voice came up.

"Good night, then," I said. I went to bed and I felt awful. I thought well anyway he can't roll off, because the roof is wide and flat, but it would be hard and maybe he would be hungry. So after a while I got two pillows and a blanket, and I went to the window and dropped them down to Joe. I didn't care if I had promised Sarah to co-operate. I knew my mother wouldn't want Joe to sleep out of doors without a blanket. "Do you want something to eat, Joe?" I asked him low so she wouldn't hear.

"Yes," he said. "I want a peanut butter sandwich and some crackers."

So I went into the kitchen and when I went past the living room I told Sarah Blevins I was going for a drink of water, and I got some peanut butter sandwiches and a whole box of crackers, and I went back up to the window and let them down to Joe by a string.

"But you oughtn't to be so stubborn, Joe," I told him while he was eating them. "You ought to do more what people say and mind them better, or something awful might happen to you."

"I don't care," Joe said. He was fixing the blanket and the pillows. He lay down on them and went to sleep.

The next morning Joe was still on the roof. We talked to him from the upstairs window, but he turned his back because Sarah was there and he wouldn't say anything to her. "Your little brother is a very strange case," Sarah Blevins said to me. She told me to get a bottle of milk and let it down to him, because we couldn't have him

starving. And she would think of what to do next.

About ten o'clock people began to drive past the house, and they would drive slow and point up to our roof. A few of them stopped their cars and got out and came up on the sidewalk and looked. "Little girl," they said to me, "is this where the little boy lives that's sitting on the roof, that his picture was in the *Journal* this morning?"

I went and got the paper, and there we all were on the vacation page, and under it it said "Out to establish new record," and "Little Joe Marsden, 7, 342 Cedar Street, has joined the ranks of marathon sitters and declares that he will stay on his roof until next Wednesday afternoon."

You couldn't see much of Joe in the picture, only his head. But the rest of us were plain. I ran and showed the paper to Sarah Blevins. "Look!" I said. "Joe got his picture in the paper, and look out in the street at all the people."

Sarah looked and she turned sort of pale. She asked me some questions, but she didn't listen to what I said. She straightened out her mouth and looked mad. "I'm going out there and try one more time," she said. "And this is the last straw."

"You mean you're not going to try to adjust him any more?" I asked her, following her out into the yard, but she didn't answer me.

She looked up at him from the sidewalk. She changed her voice from mad to sweet. "Helen, do you believe in magic?" she said to me. "I do. I'm going to close my eyes and count to ten, and when I open them I believe Joe will be down off of the roof, standing right here on the

grass." Then she shut her eyes and began to count.

By now there were two cars parked in front of the house and a fat man and a woman in one of them and his face was red and he acted funny. He made funny motions at Joe and he yelled, "Don't you do it, sonny. You stay there. She's just trying to get you down." But he didn't talk plain, and he smelled funny. "Shhhh," the woman in the car said, "Shhhh." But she was giggling herself, and she acted nearly as funny as her husband.

"Six, seven, eight," Sarah was saying very slow.

But just then something funny seemed to happen to Joe. He looked down and saw the people looking up at him and he heard the fat man yelling, "Don't you do it, sonny." Then all of a sudden instead of hiding from them he began to jump up and down on the roof and yell at Sarah, "This is my house. Let me alone." And then he called her a bad name. "Go home, old jackass," he said.

Sarah opened her mouth and looked surprised. I guess she was surprised that Joe could talk. He had not said anything before her until now.

The fat man began to laugh as loud as he could. "That's telling her!" he said and he drove the car away, and he was sort of whooping as he went, and so was his wife. "That's telling her," they said.

The people in the other car stayed, though. Twice Sarah started to climb the trellis so she could talk to Joe better, but both times he said, "Let me alone," and looked like he was going to jump. So Sarah had to get down, and she went over and talked to a woman. She told her that in all the time she had worked with children she had never in

her life seen one as stubborn as Joe. But she said if everyone had just let him alone she could have had him adjusted, but now everything was spoiled.

But nobody paid much attention to her because now Joe had turned out to be famous, because he was the only roof sitter in town, and nobody cared what Sarah thought.

The more people stopped and looked up at Joe the more I got proud of him and I would tell everybody I was his sister and that he had stayed up there all day and all night and was going to stay on until Wednesday, and everybody asked me questions about him and laughed, and about three o'clock some newsreel cameramen that were in town for something else took some pictures of Joe for the movies.

It was just after this that my mother and father came home. When they got out of the taxi my mother saw the people standing there and she began to look scared. "What is it?" she said. "What's happened?"

"Look, mother. Look, papa," I yelled, pointing up to the roof. "Joe's up there. He's been up there nearly two days. He had his picture in the paper, and the people have been coming to see him all day. He's famous now."

Then Sarah Blevins ran over and began talking fast, and she was really crying. She kept saying things about how she had tried to adjust Joe, and then these people began to come and notice him and encourage him, and everything was spoiled.

"And he called her a jackass," I said. "And this is the stubbornest he ever was in his life. But now he's not so

shy any more. He didn't hide from the people. Aren't you glad Joe's going to be in the movies and everybody will get to see him?"

But my mother didn't seem to be glad. She stood there looking mad and disgusted. "I ought never to have gone off in the first place," she said.

"Joe, you ought not to have done that," my father told him. "You ought to know better." Just then he saw the roses that had been stepped on and smashed on Joey's way up, and he gave a mad sound. "I'm a good notion to come up there and blister you good," he said.

But when Joe saw that Sarah was leaving he came down by himself. And Sarah went away with her little black bag, and she said she was so nervous she didn't know what she was doing. All the people went away, and that was the end of Joe being a roof sitter. He had to eat his supper and go to bed, even if it wasn't dark, and he couldn't have any of the box of candy they had brought from Nashville where they had left and come home because my father's Aunt Sadie had turned out not to be so sick after all.

But Joe was famous for several days and all over town children began sitting on roofs, trying to break the record. One of them, a little girl named Gladys Potts, sat on her garage roof for ninety-three hours, but a storm came up, and she had to come down.

Still, it seemed that all the attention he had got did not quite adjust Joe, because later when they asked him to be in a Sunday school play he said he wouldn't, and he didn't. Not even when they promised to give him some bananas afterward.

FATHER AND THE BIRDS

M

Y FATHER WAS ALWAYS GET-

ting something new to be interested in. He would do one thing awhile, then he would change and do something different. Once he bought some books through the mail that showed you how to draw. They had pictures of naked people in them so my mother would not let us look at them, but when my father came home from the hardware store where he worked he would draw feet and arms and legs like the ones in the book, and my brother Joe and I could watch him if we didn't cough or breathe down his neck. But after a while he stopped drawing and got interested in taking pictures. Then when cold weather came he started making things in the basement out of wood. Once it was a whatnot, and once it was a vegetable bin, and once it was a thing to hang hats on. But after a while spring came, and my father didn't have anything to be interested in.

One afternoon he had come home from work, and he was in the back yard walking around. Joe and I were out there playing, and all of a sudden my father stopped



—making things in the basement

walking and began staring up into the apple tree over our heads.

I looked up too, but I didn't see anything. "What are you looking at, papa?" I asked him.

"Shh," he said, frowning. He tiptoed toward the tree and stood under it, stretching his neck and looking. I opened my mouth to ask him again, but he shook his head and pointed up at a limb. A bird was sitting on it. It was a brown bird, with a thing growing on its head and a long piece of straw in its mouth.

"Look, Joey," I told my little brother. I whispered it, but the bird must have heard me, because it looked down at us and dropped the straw and flew away. My father was mad at me and said, "There, see what you did? You scared it away. Can't you be quiet for even one minute?"

"I didn't mean to," I said. He looked up in the tree for a while longer.

"I guess it will come back," he said. "If you and Joe will be quiet and not scare it, it might come back and build a nest and lay some eggs in it." He started talking to himself a little, and walking around looking at the tree.

"What kind of a bird was it, papa?" I asked him after a while.

"What?" my father said, sort of disgusted. "You mean to say that you don't know a cedar waxwing when you see one at your age? Why, when I was four years old I knew that much. By the time I was as old as Joe I knew all the common birds and their songs and their habits. It's just like I always said, the city is no place to raise

a child. If I had my way every child would be brought up on a farm close to nature."

He walked around a little more, muttering to himself. Then he said, "If we had a birdbath and a feeding station out here I wouldn't be surprised if we could have a whole back yard full of birds by the middle of the summer. And you and Joe could watch them hatch. It would be an interesting hobby for you and you could learn all about nature."

Joey was not listening.

"Are you going to be interested in birds next, Papa?" I said.

"Besides, it would give you something to be responsible for," my father said. He got out a piece of paper and started writing on it. "Yes sir," he said. "I'll start on it tomorrow. We'll make the birdbath tomorrow afternoon. You can help me."

"That will be fun, won't it, Joey?" I said.

But Joe kept on shoveling dirt and didn't say anything. "I think it will be fun," I said.

The next day some men came in a truck with four bags of cement and a lot of rocks. "What in the world . . ." my mother said, when she had looked at the slip of paper they gave her and saw that it was really for us.

"I know what it is," I told her. "Don't you remember? It's for papa's birdbath that we're going to make."

"Yes, but for heaven's sake!" my mother said. "He's got enough stuff here to build a swimming pool. What kind of birds is he making it for—eagles?" But she told the men

to put it in the back yard under the tree. That night when my father came home he put on his overalls and we began to make the birdbath.

He mixed the cement in a dishpan with a lot of water, and he told Joey and me to stick the rocks on where he told us to.

After we had worked a few minutes Joey stopped. "I don't want to do this any more," he said.

"I do," I said.

"All right, then," my father told Joey. "Helen will. And if you're going to be so all-fired lazy you can go off somewhere else. You're not going to stand here and watch us work."

Joey went in the house and I put the rocks down while my father spread the cement on. It got higher and higher, and pretty soon it began to look like a kind of a monument. When it got dark we stopped working.

"The next thing is to find something to put on top to hold the water," my father said. "We'll get a pan and cover it with rocks and cement, and the next thing you know we'll have as artistic a little birdbath as you'd find anywhere. If you bought it, it would cost ten or twelve dollars."

The next morning we finished the birdbath before my father went to work. It looked sort of funny. My father called my mother out to look at it.

"It adds something to the back yard," he told her. "There's a lot of cement left; maybe I'll make a sundial later on."

Joey started feeling of the cement to see if it was wet.

"Look out, Joe," my mother yelled. "It looks awfully shaky. It might fall over on your feet."

"It's as firm as a rock," my father said. He shook it to show how strong it was. A few pieces fell out. "But it's not quite dry yet," he said.

"Keep away from it, Joe," my mother said.

All afternoon I stayed in the back yard and waited for the birds to come. A few flew around the branches of the apple tree and sat on them, but they didn't pay any attention to the birdbath. By night I was tired of waiting.

"No birds came," I told my father.

"We'll build a feeding station in the fence corner," he said. "That will bring them. Every day you must put crumbs on it for them to eat and a piece of apple and things like that. I'll go call up the place and order some lumber. Then you'll see!"

A truckload of boards came the next day and my mother said some things under her breath, then she told the men to put them in the back yard where the rest of the sacks of cement still were. When my father came home I was playing marbles with Joe, but he told me to come hold the boards while he sawed them.

"Joe, you go on in the house," I told him. "You can't stand here and watch us if you're not going to work."

"I don't want to watch you," Joe said. He went around in front to play.

"Never mind," I said, "you'll be sorry."

I got tired of holding the boards. I thought: I wish I was bad like Joe, then I wouldn't have to work. "No birds have

come yet," I told my father.

"Wait till we get the feeding station finished," he said.
"Plenty will come then."

When the feeding station was finished it was like a shelf on some stilts. We put some crumbs and a carrot on it, and then my father said we would sit on the other side of the yard behind the bushes and watch to see what would happen. For a long time nothing did, then after a while two sparrows flew down and started pecking at the crumbs. Then they flew away again.

"There!" my father said.

"Now they've started," I told him. "I bet Joe wishes he had helped. Don't he?"

"Yes," my father said. "But this is nothing compared to what it will be later on. You must get yourself a little notebook and write down all the birds that come to the feeding station. It will be interesting for you to read when you get older. I did that one summer when I was a boy."

"Where is the book you wrote?" I asked him.

"It got lost," he said. "And you can look up the ones you don't know. By the time summer is over you ought to be able to name any common bird of the Southeastern States."

That's too much like school, I thought.

I could see Joey around in the sand pile making a house out of some of the rocks that were left over.

"I guess I better go play with Joey now," I said.

"Shh," my father whispered, pointing. "Look." The two sparrows had come back and had begun to eat on the carrot. And just then a pigeon flew down from the top of

the house and sat in the birdbath and began to splash the water.

"See!" my father said. "That makes three already. Now let's keep real quiet and see what comes next."

But no more came.

"Well, you've got to give them time," my father said when we went in to supper.

"Yes," I said, but my legs were stiff, and so was my back from sitting still so long. I was thinking to myself maybe it would be better if I was lazy, like Joe. But anyway I would know all about nature and Joe wouldn't.

My father gave me a dime to get a notebook with and he showed me how to fix the pages in it like he did when he was a boy. And he told me to watch the feeding station and the birdbath all day and make a record of any birds that came. So all day long while my father was at work I stayed behind the bushes and watched. When my mother told me to come in and practice my music lesson I told her I couldn't because of what I was doing.

"You get yourself in here, young lady! Birds or no birds, you are going to practice your music lesson. They can wait till you get through."

But as soon as the half hour was up I hurried back out to the bushes. That night when my father came home he looked at what I had written. Five sparrows had come and I had written them all down. My father looked sort of disappointed.

"Well," he said.

I felt sorry for him. "A robin started to light, but it flew

the other way. I guess it changed its mind," I said.

His face brightened up. "Bring your book and we'll watch to see what comes now. This is the best time of day to watch birds."

I thought to myself, I am getting sort of tired of watching them, but I didn't say that because it might hurt my father's feelings. We waited a long time behind the bush, and nothing came again but one pigeon. And I could see my little brother Joe in the kitchen waiting to get the cake pan to scrape.

"Write down the pigeon," my father said. "It's not really a wild bird, but write it down anyway."

Joe was looking out the kitchen door, licking the icing spoon.

I wrote down the pigeon, but I was thinking: I wish I wasn't so good; I wish I was bad like Joe; he has more fun than I do.

For a few weeks after that it was nothing but sparrows. School was out, and I stayed behind the bushes all day long except when I had to practice or set the table. But every night when my father came home and looked at the notebook it was the same. It seemed to make him feel very bad. "I can't understand it," he said.

Then all of a sudden one morning a different bird came to the feeding board. It was a little yellow one that I forgot the name of now. That night when my father read it in the notebook he got very excited. "You see!" he said. "You have to be patient where nature is concerned. It can't be rushed." He showed the name to my mother. "You see

what happens if you only wait," he told her. "This is good training for Helen. It is teaching her not to give up hope."

"Yes," my mother said. She was busy fixing over a dress or something.

My father went out and watched a long time for the yellow bird to come back, but he did not get discouraged when it didn't. He told me to watch closer than ever during the day, and to be sure to keep the birdbath full and enough crumbs on the feeding board. "It came once, and it will come again," he said. "And it will bring others with it. When they get a little more used to us and know they're safe we won't be able to drive them away."

And it turned out that he was right. The next day there were two robins and a wren and the yellow one again. And the day after that there were more different kinds, and pretty soon they came thick and fast in big flocks and covered the feeding board and fought over the crumbs. The birdbath would have as many as five birds in it at one time, splashing out the water, and I would have to fill it up three or four times during the morning. My father got awfully excited. "You mustn't let it stay empty for even a few minutes," he said. And he told me to scatter crumbs all around on the ground too, so there would be enough for them all. I had to hang a bottle of syrup on a bush for the humming birds because they didn't like crumbs. "They must always find plenty of everything here, or they'll go somewhere else to get their food," my father said.

So I spent nearly all my time tending to the birds, and the more I tended to them the more they came until in a

few weeks the back yard was full from morning till night.

They sat on the fence and in the trees and they hopped all over the ground. All the time they were singing and squawking until my mother said it made her head ache. "You can't even walk without stepping on a bird," she said. "And it's not safe to sit under a tree any more for them. Nasty little things!" She was taking in some clothes that had been hanging on the line, and the birds had ruined them, and they had to be washed over.

"Disgusting little things," my mother said. "I will certainly be glad when your father gets birds out of his system."

But my father only got more interested in them instead of being tired of them. We didn't have to hide behind the bushes any more to watch them. They had got so tame that they would sit on my father's deck chair and hop around his feet. They would fly so low over his head that they would almost touch it. This got him very excited. "I believe I could tame them so they would sit on my shoulders and eat out of my hand," he said. "There's no limit to what patience will do with birds."

"You would look a perfect fool with birds sitting all over you," my mother said.

"Never mind," my father told her. "You always discourage me in my hobbies, but it's things like that that keep a man young. And look what this summer has done for Helen. She has been out in the open air all day, and that has been good for her health, and besides she can name any common bird on sight. I suppose you'll admit that's a useful accomplishment for anybody."

"I don't see why," my mother said. "The child's a nervous wreck. She's associated with birds too much. It's not natural."

My father didn't like to argue, so he wouldn't say anything more. He went outside and started practicing holding a piece of bread in his hand, and at first the birds would only snatch it in their bills and fly away, but in a few days the robins would sit on his arm for just a minute at a time, long enough to get the bread, and finally they got so tame that two or three would sit on his shoulders or even his head. Sometimes he would have as many as ten birds sitting all over him, even if he didn't have any bread for them.

He got out the camera that he had had when he was interested in taking pictures, and he told me to take his picture.

"I want to show it to the men at the store," he said. "When I tell them about it they don't believe me. Besides, it would be a very novel thing to put on our Christmas cards this year."

The pictures turned out to have a white streak across them, but they were pretty good. My father sent one to a magazine called *Nature* for them to print, but they never did put it in.

So the summer went on by and it was late in August and it was almost time for school to start. I could hardly believe it, the time seemed so short. It didn't seem as if I had had any vacation at all, with tending to the birds. It seemed as if I had done nothing but work.

"It's about time for your father to take up something new," my mother said. "And I hope to goodness it will be pretty soon now. Every time I look out the window and see him out there like that it makes my flesh creep."

One afternoon my father came home from work and he had a little package in his hand. "I was going through the ten cent store," he said. "They had a lot of seeds thrown out on a table for only five cents a package. So I thought I would plant a little patch of mustard greens in the back yard. There's all that ground going to waste, and besides if we grow our own mustard greens it will save on the grocery bill."

"It certainly will," my mother said. "I think that's a good idea."

My father looked surprised and pleased too. "You do?" he said. "I'll go out and dig up the ground before it gets dark and sow the seeds tomorrow. Helen can help me."

"I guess I better practice my music lesson now," I said.

When I got through practicing my father was still digging and I watched him from the window because if I went out there he might let me help him.

He could hardly dig because the birds kept flying around and sitting all over him. "Get away now," he would tell them, but they didn't seem to understand him. They were flying around his head and singing and squawking, and even when he raised the hoe to dig they would just fly off a little piece to keep from being hit, and then come right back again,

I saw my father look around to see if anyone was watching, and then he pushed the birds away with his hand.

"Shoo," he said. But they came right back and settled down on the dirt. So he went on trying to dig, but it was no use. After a while he threw the hoe down and came on in the house. He sat down in the living room, and he seemed to be thinking. Finally he said, "Helen, it's about time for the birds to go south anyway, so you don't need to put so many crumbs out for them after this. They can find their own food for a while now."

"Ha, ha," my mother said under her breath.

So the next day I didn't put any crumbs out, and I didn't fill the birdbath, but the birds came anyway, and sat on the grass and in the trees, and all over the ground my father had dug, and pulled worms out of it. And when my father came home they all flew to him singing and squawking and perched all over him again, and every time he tried to dig they got in front of him and started looking for worms until he couldn't do anything for them.

"I could throw some rocks at them," Joe told my father.

My father looked at Joe a minute. Then he said in a loud voice, "Of course not. Don't you ever let me catch you throwing rocks at harmless birds. That's about as cruel and inhuman a thing as you could possibly do. I don't ever want to hear tell of a boy of mine doing a thing like that. Shoo," he said to the birds.

My mother was on the back porch getting something out of the refrigerator. "Ha, ha," she said, this time out loud.

But finally by dark he got the ground dug up and the seeds planted. "Now in a week or two we will see some little green leaves peeping above the ground," he told Joe

and me, "and pretty soon they will be ready to eat. A dish of mustard greens and vinegar—that's a dish fit for a king. That's what I was raised on when I was a boy. I wish I had thought of it earlier and we could have some tomatoes and things."

I did what my father said, and didn't feed the birds any more, but they kept on coming, and they hopped on the garden and pecked in it. "Look, Joe, they're eating up the seeds," I said. "We ought to do something to stop them."

"I could set a trap for them," he said, but I knew my father wouldn't like that, so I said we'd better leave them alone.

Every night my father would come home and water the garden with the hose, and once he squirted a little water at the birds, but they seemed to think it was a shower bath and they sat down in the puddles and squawked and fluttered their wings.

"Get away from there!" my father told them; then he said something under his breath that I couldn't hear.

But they kept on splashing and paying no attention.

So two or three weeks went by, and the garden didn't come up; then it was time for school to start.

And every day my father would look more disgusted when he came in from the garden, and finally he stopped digging, and he stopped looking to see if the plants were coming up. He tore down the feeding station to use for kindling, and the birdbath fell down by itself, and my father would hardly go into the back yard at all any more.

He bought himself a lot of wires and things and started

to build a radio broadcasting station in the basement.

I took the bird notebook to school once to show Miss Adkins when we were having nature study, and she said, "That is very nice, but we are going to work on a unit on Fall Flowers now."

And my father finished the radio station by Christmas and every night he tried to get Panama, but all he could get was a college boy over in Maryville named John Slitz.

"It would have been cheaper and quicker to call him on the telephone," my mother said once when we were listening to them talking. "It's only twelve miles away."

THE PINK SHIRT

ONE DAY IN THE SPRING

my mother took Joe and me to town to buy us some new clothes. First she bought a blue dress for me with red buttons, then she bought us both a pair of shoes. Then she took us to the boys' department to get a blouse for Joe.

The clerk was a lady with stick-out teeth and a pencil stuck in her knot, and she smiled at us, especially at Joe.

"Now what can I do for you?" she asked my mother.

"I'd like to look at some blouses for my little boy," my mother said. "He wears size six, and I want something that will wear well and not fade."

"Yes, indeedy," the clerk said. "Just come over here, please. What a nice little boy," she said to Joey. "And he's going to start to school pretty soon, I bet."

"He already goes to school. He's in the first grade," I said.

"Sure enough?" she said. "What color?" she asked my mother.

"Blue, I guess," my mother told her.

Joe was looking in a glass case where there were a lot of

blouses stretched out with a water pistol lying on top of each one.

The clerk went behind the counter and started looking in some boxes. Joe went over to where my mother was and pulled her to where the water pistols were.

"Look," he said.

"Yes, I see," said my mother. She was looking at some things on top of the counter.

"I want one of these," Joe said.

The clerk turned around with some boxes of blouses and she saw where Joe was pointing. She laughed. "Look what he's found," she said. "Those little sharp eyes see everything, don't they?"

Joe stared at her. He looked as if he didn't like her much. "I want one of these," he said to my mother in a whisper.

"No, Joe," my mother said, still looking at things.

"If your mother buys you one of these Jolly Boy shirts you can have one of those water pistols," the clerk said, smiling more at Joe. "We're giving one away this week to every kiddy that gets a Jolly Boy shirt."

My mother showed Joe a blue blouse with a tie fastened onto it.

"Do you like this one, Joey?" she asked.

"No, I want one of these," Joe told her, pointing to the blouses with the guns.

My mother asked the clerk how much the Jolly Boy shirts were.

"A dollar and nineteen cents," the clerk said.

"That's too high," said my mother. "I didn't mean to go that high."

"It's a good buy," the clerk told her. "They wear like iron. Honestly, they never wear out. My sister's little boy is wearing one right now that she bought him two years ago."

"Listen, Joe," my mother said. "You can have two of these others for the same price as one of those. If you get this kind you can only have one blouse. Now which would you rather have, two blouses or just one?"

"I want one with a pistol," Joe said.

"All right then," my mother said, groaning a little. "Only, remember, you can have just one."

"I don't care," Joe said, staring at them.

So the clerk started looking, and she could find only one Jolly Boy shirt that was Joe's size. It was a pink one.

"I don't know," my mother said, holding it up.

"You couldn't do better for any price," the clerk told her. "And it's just the shade for him with his fair coloring and all."

"Look, Joe, this is the only one your size," my mother said. "If you get it, now, you'll have to wear it every Sunday for a long, long time. And next fall you'll have to wear it to school till it wears out."

Joe didn't even look at it. He was looking at the guns.

"And you can only play with the water gun when you have your old clothes on."

"I don't care," Joey said.

"All right," my mother said.

The clerk put the blouse in a bag and gave Joe the water gun. "Here, sugar," she said.

Joe looked at her as if he didn't like her at all, and he

took the gun. All the way to the elevator and all the way down he kept pointing it at people and pulling the trigger. When we went past the drinking fountain he wanted to fill it up with water, but my mother said no, to wait till we got home.

As soon as we got home and Joe changed his clothes, he filled the gun up and started shooting at things.

He squirted it at some sparrows and the next door people's cat, and all the trees. He couldn't hit anything.

"Let me shoot some, Joe," I said.

"No," said Joe.

"All right," I told him. "You'll be sorry."

And sure enough, in a little while he was squirting water on the grass with it and all of a sudden the trigger broke, and the gun wouldn't shoot any more.

"See!" I told him.

"I can fix it," he said. He got a nail and unbent the things that held it together and tried to make it work again. But no matter what he did to it the gun wouldn't squirt. It was broken.

"See," I said. "You wouldn't let me play with it and now look what happened."

He kept trying to shoot the gun and not saying anything. But it was no use. He had ruined it. It would never work again.

The next day after this was Sunday. Every Sunday Joe and I went to the primary department of the Mississippi Avenue Methodist Sunday School, but Joe hardly ever wanted to go.

"Why do we have to?" he would ask my mother.

"So you won't grow up to be a heathen," she would say.

This time when we started to get ready for Sunday School Joey asked my mother like he always did, "Why do we have to go?"

My mother had just burned something in the kitchen, and she was sort of mad.

"Don't start that," she said.

"Why do we?" he asked again.

"So you can wear your new shirt," my mother said, buttoning it on him.

Joe looked down at it. "I don't want to wear this," he said.

"Yes you do," my mother told him. "You picked it out yourself. You said yourself you wanted it instead of two blue ones."

"Yes you did, Joe, don't you remember?" I asked him. I was standing there with my new dress on.

"I don't want it now," he said.

"Yes you do, too, now don't be stubborn," my mother said. "Take him on, Helen, before I lose my temper."

So I told him to come on and we started to Sunday School. All the way Joe walked so slow that I thought we would never get there. He kept looking down at his shirt and kicking little rocks along the sidewalk.

"Hurry up, Joe," I kept telling him, but he wouldn't walk any faster.

But finally we got to the church and we were just barely in time. The primary department was getting ready to begin. I hurried up and sat down at my table, but they all

had to wait for Joey to sit down at his. He walked as slow as he could, looking down at the floor as he went.

"Children, look at Joey in his pretty new pink blouse," Miss Hazel his teacher said in a cheerful voice. "Joey, can't you say good morning to Miss Hazel?"

Joey didn't say anything. Finally he sat down, but he kept looking down at his feet.

"All right then, if you'd rather not," Miss Hazel said. She went to the piano and we all began to sing "Brighten the Corner Where You Are."

When we had finished and had the birthdays and taken up the collection we started having our lessons. Miss Ruth my teacher was telling us a Bible story, but I kept looking over at Joey to see if he was going to stop being stubborn and do like he was supposed to.

But instead of stopping being stubborn he was being worse than ever. Miss Hazel was trying to get him to tell what he had learned last Sunday, but he wouldn't say anything.

"Who was it Pharaoh's daughter found in the bulrushes?" she asked him. "Tell us, Joey, it was a little baby and his name was—"

But Joey wouldn't tell her no matter how much she asked him.

All of a sudden Miss Hazel seemed to get mad.

"All right, then, Joey, if you don't want to join in with the rest of us you can go sit in the corner by yourself," she said. "I don't want a little boy that sits there with a frown on his face making everybody unhappy. You can just stay in the corner until you can come back in a good spirit."



I don't want to wear this

She took Joey's chair and put it in the corner partly behind the piano, and for a minute Joe just stood there, but finally he went over and sat down in it. All you could see was a piece of him, but it looked very stubborn.

I kept looking over there to see what Joe was going to do, but all he did was sit there, and after a while Sunday School was over, and still he hadn't come out.

I went over there to get him, and Miss Hazel went too. He was looking down at the floor and his lip was sticking out.

"Helen, Joey's going to be a good boy next Sunday," Miss Hazel said to me. "He's going to sing the little songs with the other children, and answer Miss Hazel's questions, aren't you, Joey? And he's going to wear a great big smile on his face so it will make everybody happy just to look at him, aren't you, Joey?"

Joe didn't say whether he was or not. He started walking out of the primary department. "Joey's going to show us how nice he can be," Miss Hazel said after us. "Just wait. You'll see, Helen."

"Joe, what made you act like that in Sunday School?" I asked him on the way home. "What made you be so awful?"

"Because I wanted to be," Joe said after a while.

"Just because you've got on that pink shirt, that's no reason," I told him.

"I don't want to wear it," he said.

"Well, that's no reason to act so awful. You better do like you're supposed to after this and mind your teacher, or you might get into trouble."

"I don't care," Joey said.

The next Sunday when we were getting ready I asked my mother what Joe was going to wear to Sunday school. "Is he going to wear his new pink shirt?" I asked her.

She was in the kitchen putting the roast in.

"Yes," she said.

"He doesn't like to wear it," I told her. "Now the water pistol's broken and he doesn't want to wear the shirt any more."

"That doesn't matter," my mother said. "Maybe next time he'll think twice before he decides on something in a hurry."

That Sunday instead of being better Joe was worse than ever. He didn't smile and he didn't answer the questions like Miss Hazel had said he would. All he did was stick out his lip and shake his head at everything she said to him.

The next time I looked at his table Miss Hazel was putting Joe's chair in the corner, and Joe was going toward it.

Miss Ruth stopped talking to us and looked very sad. All the girls in my class looked at me like they thought it was my fault that Joe was like he was.

"Helen," Miss Ruth said to me. "Can't you talk to your little brother and make him act better? If he doesn't turn over a new leaf pretty soon I'm going to have to call up your mamma and ask her not to send him to Sunday school any more. Much as I'd hate to do that, he is worrying the life out of poor Miss Hazel, and we can't put up with it much longer."

On the way home I told Joe what Miss Ruth had said.

"Joe, you better behave yourself more or you're going to get into trouble if you don't watch out," I told him. "You better turn over a new leaf like Miss Ruth said so she won't tell mother on you and get you whipped. You better start talking to Miss Hazel when she tells you to and stop frowning up your face like that in Sunday school."

Joe didn't say anything. He just kept kicking things along the sidewalk.

The next Sunday Miss Hazel had charge of the opening exercises, and after we had sung she was talking to us. She held up a picture of Daniel in the Lions' Den. "Who is this?" she asked us. "Joey Marsden, you tell us, who is this?"

For a minute Joey didn't say anything. But finally he looked at the picture.

"Jesus," he said.

Everybody looked surprised that Joey had said something.

"I'm glad you tried, anyway, Joey," Miss Hazel told him. "That makes me very happy. But it's not Jesus. It's Daniel. Now you tell us who it is, Joey."

"Jesus," he said, looking mad at her.

Miss Hazel took the picture over to where he could see it better. "See, Joe?" she said. "See the lions? Now tell us right this time, who is it?"

"Jesus," Joey said.

Miss Hazel said something to herself. She looked over at Miss Ruth and raised her eyebrows and shook her head and made her shoulders go up.

"All right, Joe," Miss Hazel said. She put his chair behind the piano and Joe went to get in it. He went very slow, kicking his feet on the floor and before he sat down he turned his head and looked at Miss Hazel. His face looked awful.

All the children in my class were looking at me. I can't help it, I thought. I tried to make him do right. I can't help it what Joe does.

"Who is this in this picture, Mary Louise?" Miss Hazel asked a little girl in a sort of mad sounding voice.

"Daniel in the lions' den," the little girl said.

"Of course it is," Miss Hazel said loudly, giving Joe's back a mad look. "It couldn't be anybody else."

She began to tell us about the picture and we were listening, and the door opened all of a sudden and the Sunday school superintendent came in. His name was Mr. Wilkins and he was a sort of fat little man without much hair on his head.

He stood around and smiled and looked cheerful while Miss Hazel finished talking. Then he said, "Miss Hazel, I wonder if these boys and girls would like to do me a little favor?"

"I'm sure they would," Miss Hazel said, showing her teeth at us. "Wouldn't you, children?"

"Yes sir," we said to Mr. Wilkins.

"Well sir, next Sunday will be Easter Sunday as you all know, and I want this department to get up a little something for a little program we're going to have upstairs where the big folks are. Would you do that for me?"

"Yes sir," we said to Mr. Wilkins.

"I think that's great," Mr. Wilkins said. "I like your spirit."

"I know they'll do the very best they can, Mr. Wilkins," Miss Hazel said, looking kind at us.

Mr. Wilkins turned around to go, then all of a sudden he saw the piece of Joe that was sticking out from behind the piano.

He went over there and looked. "Who is this little man?" he asked.

Miss Hazel's face turned sort of red. "Mr. Wilkins, that's a little boy that forgot his manners, and we had to put him back there until he could remember them again," she said.

Mr. Wilkins looked sad at Joey. "I'm very sorry to hear that, Miss Hazel," he said. He kept looking at Joey a few minutes, and Joey kept looking at the floor.

All of a sudden Mr. Wilkins seemed to cheer up. "You know, Miss Hazel," he said. "I believe this little boy would say a little verse for me upstairs next Sunday. Don't you think he would?"

Mr. Wilkins winked at Miss Hazel when he said it. Miss Hazel stretched her mouth in a smile. "I wouldn't be surprised," she said.

"Would you do that for me, sonny?" Mr. Wilkins asked, bending over to look at Joe.

Joe didn't say whether he would or not. He moved a little away from Mr. Wilkins, but Mr. Wilkins didn't seem to notice it.

"I believe he will," he told Miss Hazel. He reached over and patted Joey's head. "Remember," he said. "I'll be counting on you."

He showed his teeth at us one more time, and then he went out.

Miss Hazel looked over at Miss Ruth and she tried to smile. Then she looked at Joe's back for a minute, and after a while she went over and told him to get up. She brought his chair back to the table. "All right, Joe, you can come sit with the other children," she said. "I guess you can be nice now."

Joe came very slow. He sat down and his face looked awful. Miss Hazel seemed to get sort of nervous when she saw how he looked. "All right, we will go on with our lessons," she said in a hurry.

After Sunday school when we had gone out of the primary department and I was waiting for Joe to come out of the Men's Toilet, Miss Hazel came out there where I was and told me to come back a minute.

"Helen, I'm going to give your little brother a part in this program next Sunday," she said. "I think it's a mistake myself but Mr. Wilkins seemed to want him to be in it. I'm not going to give him anything to say, because I know he would never say it. We're going to have a little drill where the smallest children each hold a cardboard letter and spell out the words A Joyous Easter across the stage, and all Joe will have to do is stand on the platform and hold up the letter R. Do you think he can do that?"

"I don't know if he can or not," I told her.

"Well, surely he can do that much," Miss Hazel said,

sort of mad. "Be sure to get him here by nine-thirty without fail."

When we got home I told my mother about Joe going to be on the program and she seemed to be very pleased. "That's fine," she said. "Your father and I must go see him."

"Can he have a new shirt to be on the program?" I asked her.

"Of course not," she said. "The one he has is the same as new. I'll do it up and he will look perfectly all right."

"It makes him mad to wear that one," I told her. "It makes him act awful."

"Don't be silly," my mother said.

All right! I thought to myself. I can't help it. I can't help it if my mother won't believe me.

That week my mother washed out Joe's shirt and ironed it, and it looked pinker than ever. When Sunday came I buttoned Joe up in it in the living room while she was getting herself ready. My father was sitting there reading the paper. He said he was too sick to go.

"Joe doesn't much like this shirt he has on," I told my father, but my father didn't pay any attention to me. He kept on reading the paper.

All right, I thought.

Joe and I had to go on ahead because we were supposed to be there at nine-thirty. All the way I kept looking at him to see if I could tell how he was going to act. His face was looking pretty stubborn.

"Joe, you better behave yourself," I told him. "You

better go on and do what you're supposed to because all those people will be watching you."

"I don't care," he said, kicking his feet.

When we got to the church and the primary department Miss Hazel and Miss Ruth were wearing some new clothes, and they were acting very excited and lining the little children up and giving them a black letter to hold. Miss Hazel put Joe at the end of the line. She tried to give him an R but Joe kept putting it down and not taking it.

Miss Hazel's face looked sort of mad but she made her voice sound sweet. "Helen," she said to me, "you know, Joe's going to be the nicest little boy upstairs today. He's going to stand nice and still and hold his letter up so everybody can see it. You'll be surprised."

But still Joe wouldn't take the R and just then Miss Ruth came hurrying back there with two safety pins. "Here, Hazel," she said. "Pin it on him. We haven't got time to humor him now. We've got to get these children upstairs."

So Miss Hazel told me to straighten Joe up while she pinned the R on the front of him and I did, but as soon as it was on him he drooped over so far that you could just barely tell what the letter was.

"Never mind," Miss Ruth said. "He'll be all right when he gets up there before the people."

"Helen, you walk along with your little brother and see that he gets on the stage all right," Miss Hazel told me, very excited. "Joe, all you have to do is stand there and hold your head up so they can read your letter. Surely you can do that much for Miss Hazel."

So the line started up the back steps and I walked behind Joe to be sure that he went. When he started walking slow I poked him a little, and pretty soon we were upstairs at the door that opened on the stage.

All of the children had gone onto the stage except two or three of the last ones, and it was time for Joe to go, but he just stood still and wouldn't move.

"Go on, Joe," I said, poking him. "You better get on there in a hurry because all of those people are reading what it says, and there has to be an R." But still he wouldn't move and his head was hanging down and his lip was sticking out.

I could see Miss Hazel sitting at the piano on the stage making motions to me and her face looked very mad.

"You better do what Miss Hazel told you to, Joe," I told him. "You're going to get into trouble in a minute."

But instead of going on like he was supposed to, all of a sudden he turned around and started going back to the primary department. I caught him by the back of his pants and tried to pull him on to the stage, but it was too late. His pants gave a rip and so did his shirt, and he started going down the stairs making an awful bump on each step. I guess you could hear it in the church all right because the people all started turning their heads and looking to see where the noise was coming from, and Miss Hazel's face had an awful look on it, so I thought I better go on down and see what Joe was going to do next.

When I got down to the primary department Joe was sitting there at his table and he looked very stubborn. I stood there and looked at him.

"What did you do that way for, Joe?" I asked him.
"Now you've ruined everything. Why don't you behave
yourself better and do what people tell you to?"

But Joe wouldn't answer me, and I didn't know what to say to him next, so I just stood there. I guess Miss Hazel will be really mad this time, I thought. I don't guess she'll like it the way Joe did.

It seemed like a long time till the program was over and the rest of the children came back downstairs. And Miss Ruth had brought them down and when she saw us an awful expression came on her face and she rushed over to me, and I thought she was going to hit me. And she began talking very fast about how I had ruined the program by making all that noise, and how it had got Miss Hazel in such a nervous condition that she had to go home, and every time I tried to tell her what had happened she talked that much louder and wouldn't listen to me.

It made me feel very funny.

So as soon as she stopped talking for a minute I thought I better go and see if I could find my mother because Joe's pants were about to fall off and I thought we better go home and fix them.

But when we started out of the primary department our mother was just coming down there to look for us and she had a worried look on her face. She told us to wait while she went in to talk to Miss Ruth, and finally she came out and told us to come on.

All the way home my mother kept asking me why we had behaved so awful.

"I don't know what got into Joe today," she kept saying.

"He hasn't done this way for a long time. He has been in things at school and everything. I thought he had nearly got over his shyness."

"It was because of his pink shirt," I kept telling her, but she never did seem to understand it.

When we went into the living room my father had got over being sick and was listening to the radio.

"Well, how did Joe do?" he asked us, and then he saw Joe's clothes and he looked sort of surprised and he said, "Oh." And when my mother unpinned the R off of Joe it had left two big holes in the front of his shirt and there was a tear in the back of it, so he couldn't wear that shirt anywhere in public again.

REMEMBER MOTHER

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ATHER WAS IN THE FRONT

yard late one afternoon cutting the hedge and I was standing there watching him, and all of a sudden a lady came up our walk. She had on a big hat and she was carrying a black brief case.

"Hello, little girl," she said to me. "How do you do," she said to my father. She stood in the middle of the sidewalk and let out a long breath. "My goodness, what a beautiful, well-kept yard," she said, looking around. "How in the world do you keep your grass so green this dry weather?"

My father stopped cutting the hedge and straightened his shoulders. He looked very pleased.

"Well," he said, "this spring I sowed the yard with grass seed and I put a good thick layer of Wonder Worker fertilizer on top of it and in a few weeks it had come out green like it is now. My wife complained some of the smell, but I think it was worth it myself."

"I should say so!" The lady smiled all over. She spread out her handkerchief on the step and sat down on it, and laid her brief case beside her. She started taking off her

gloves. "You've got some nice rose bushes too. You must be quite a gardener."

My father looked even more pleased. "Well, I lived on a farm when I was a boy," he told her. "I guess it sort of stays in your blood. Some of these days I'm going to have a vegetable garden. Maybe this summer if I get around to it."

"We had one once before but it didn't come up," I told her. I sat down on the end of the step and watched her. My father gave me a sort of mad look but the lady didn't pay any attention to what I said. She was unzipping her brief case.

"I'm a farm girl myself," she said. "I always say there's nothing like spending your childhood in the great out of doors. Is this your little girl?"

"Yes," my father said, beginning to clip again.

"She's a pretty child," the lady said, looking kind at me. "What pretty hair!"

I felt surprised. Nobody had ever said that before.

"I've got a little brother too," I told her. "My mother took him to town this afternoon to get his teeth fixed."

"Well, isn't that nice!" she said. "That makes it even better." She began to take out some papers and cards and things. "They don't stay little long," she told my father. "First thing you know these kiddies of yours will be grown up with children of their own."

"I'm nine already," I said.

My father stopped clipping the hedge and looked at the grass. "It's a funny thing about fertilizer," he said. "Now you take bone meal. There's nothing in the world better

for potatoes but it's not worth a hoot for grass. It seems to turn it brown. I'd just as soon put salt on grass as bone meal, for all the good it will do."

"Really?" the lady said looking polite. "Not changing the subject," she said, "but you know some day you're going to think back about your children the way they are today and a good photograph would mean the world to you."

"We had our picture in the paper once," I told her.
"Did you see it?"

"I don't remember," she said.

"And when papa was interested in it he took a lot of pictures of us," I said. "Some of them had white streaks on them, and Joe nearly always hides his face, but you can tell who it is. Do you want me to go in the house and get them?"

"No, thank you," she said, looking at me not quite so kind. "I mean a large hand-tinted photograph that you'd be proud to keep in the living room. Of course kodak pictures are all very well but they don't catch the personality like a real photograph."

My father kept clicking the hedge clippers and looking dreamy. "If I had my life to live over I'd take an agriculture course out at the university," he said. "They teach them all about different kinds of fertilizer and new ways of growing things. Someday if I live I may take one yet and get a little place out somewhere and raise vegetables and a few chickens. That's what I'd like to do in my old age."

"That would be lovely," the lady said. Her face was

beginning to look a little discouraged but her voice sounded sweet. "Now the People's Studio has a very special offer this week on children's photographs. This coupon and one dollar entitles you to a hand-tinted photograph of your child. It's our Mother's Day special. Nothing means more to a mother than a life-like photograph of her children. Wouldn't mummy be surprised to find one by her plate at the breakfast table on Mother's Day?" she said smiling at me.

"We nearly always give her a handkerchief," I said. "I guess she would like a picture better though, if we had enough money to get one."

My father kept on clipping the hedge and you could see that he was thinking about the farm he was going to have, but he didn't say anything. The lady sat there and looked at him a while, and she let her breath out once or twice.

"I see you're a born gardener," she said finally. "Just the way your place looks. There's not a greener, prettier yard in Knoxville and I ought to know because I've canvassed the whole city introducing this wonderful Mother's Day offer on children's photographs."

"Well," my father said, and he started to talk about fertilizer again, but I went up close to him where he could see me.

"Papa," I said. "Can Joe and I have our pictures taken?"

My father looked at me. "What for?" he asked.

"So you can remember what we look like," I said. "And besides mother might like to have it for Mother's Day."

"Bless her little heart," the lady said. "We ought to

encourage them in their little unselfish ideas, oughtn't we? And after all, what could they get their mother for a dollar that would mean so much in sentiment?"

My father opened his mouth to say something, but before he could say it she handed him a coupon in a hurry. "Just fill this out and bring it to the studio with you," she said. "It's not necessary to have an appointment, but I must have the dollar in advance because we have to have some idea of how many people are going to take advantage of this offer."

My father began to look in his pocket for a dollar and finally he found one. He looked at it a minute and handed it to her sort of slow. "I guess you're right," he said.

"I'm sure you'll never regret it," she told him, taking the money and zipping up her briefcase in a hurry. She started down the walk. "Are there any children next door?" she asked me as she went.

"No," I said. I watched her walking fast down the street and I was thinking about what she said, that I had pretty hair. Nobody ever said that, I thought.

For a minute my father stood there looking at the coupon a little surprised. Then he folded it up small and put it in his pocket and picked up the hedge clippers.

"When are we going, papa?" I asked him.

"Where?" he said, beginning to clip.

"To have our pictures taken."

"Oh yes," he said. "Sometime. Sometime this week."

I saw that he was beginning to think of something else. "Could we go tomorrow after I take my music?" I asked.

"Could Joe go with me to my music lesson and then have our pictures made?"

"Yes, that will be fine," he said. He began to talk to himself about a garden and in a minute he put the clippers down and went around to the back yard. I went in the house and looked in the bathroom mirror. I don't think I'm pretty, I thought looking at my face. I looked at my hair and it didn't seem to me to be very pretty. It's too long, I thought. It needs some of it cut off and then it would look better.

Just then I heard my mother and Joey coming on the porch and I went out there.

"Mother, can I have a haircut?" I asked her.

"No, not now," she said.

"I mean sometime before tomorrow afternoon," I told her. I opened my mouth to tell her why, then I remembered not to just in time. In a minute I would have told her about the surprise.

"Can I before then?" I asked her.

"We'll see," she said.

My mother went in the kitchen to start cooking supper, and Joe went upstairs to take his good clothes off and I went too. He took them off very slow, and every few minutes he would stop to feel of the new filling in his tooth.

"Joe, you're going to have a surprise tomorrow," I told him.

"What is it?" he asked, feeling of the filling.

"If I told you it wouldn't be a surprise, and besides you might tell mother. But anyway, it's something good."

"Is it something to eat?" Joe said.

"You ought to be ashamed," I told him. "You're always thinking of yourself. You ought to think more about other people. You ought to think about your mother and all she does for you."

"Why ought I?"

"Because next Sunday's Mother's Day," I said.

Joe didn't say anything else, and I stood there for a minute wondering if I better tell him but I thought no, he's too little to keep a secret and besides he might be stubborn and say he wouldn't have his picture taken. So it would be better to wait till tomorrow and let him find out what it was when it was too late to do anything about it.

Just then my mother came to the bottom of the stairs and told me to come down and practice.

"You'll see when the time comes," I told Joe. "And that's all I can tell you about it."

"I don't care anyway," Joe said.

I went in the living room and practiced out of the exercise book a few minutes; then I started making up a piece of my own. Bang bang bang it went in the bass and tinkle tinkle tinkle up at the top of the piano.

My mother came running in there with flour all over her hands.

"Helen, what on earth are you playing?" she asked.

"It's a piece called 'Apple Blossoms.'" I thought that would be a good name for it.

"Are you playing the notes right?"

"Yes."

"It must be because it's so loud that it sounds so awful. Keep your foot on the soft pedal, for heaven's sake."

So I played it softer and it sounded better, but all of a sudden I remembered that Mrs. Rainwater, my music teacher, had told me that if I didn't have a better lesson tomorrow she was going to write a note to my mother. My mother would feel bad if she did that so I thought I better practice the real piece that Mrs. Rainwater had given me. It was called "The Happy Huntsman" and I was supposed to memorize it to play in a recital in about a week.

The next morning when I first got up I looked in the bathroom mirror, and I remembered that I needed a haircut before we had our pictures taken. We didn't have to go to school because of a teacher's meeting, so after breakfast I asked my mother if I could go down to the Peerless Barber Shop and have it cut.

My mother had her head tied up in a towel and she was climbing on a chair to clean out the pantry shelves.

"Not today," she said.

"I need one," I told her. "I can't go to my music lesson this afternoon without a haircut."

"Don't be silly," she said. "Run on upstairs and make up the beds. I'm not going to have time for them this morning."

I went, but I went pretty slow. I need a haircut, I thought. The way it is now it's not long and it's not short. It looks awful.

While I was making up the beds I kept looking in the

mirror. Every time I looked my hair looked worse. My mother will feel bad when she sees a picture of me with my hair like this, I thought. If she knew why I wanted a haircut she would let me have one.

When I went in my mother and father's room my mother's sewing basket was on the table and the embroidery scissors were sticking out the top. I looked in their mirror. I thought I would cut a little off the edges. I cut a little off, and then a little more, but the scissors were dull and they would hardly cut at all. My hair was looking pretty jagged and I was feeling sort of nervous, and all of a sudden the scissors slipped and cut a big piece out of one side.

Now I've ruined it, I thought. Now the sides look different and it looks even worse than it did when it was too long.

I tried to cut the long side to match the short side, but the scissors made that side look worse than the other one.

I put the scissors back in the basket and I picked up all of the hair off the floor as quick as I could, and then I stood there and looked at my head to see if there was anything I could do about it. All I could think of to do was to hide it some way till the hair grew out again, because if my mother saw it she might feel bad or she might get mad.

I got a handkerchief out of my father's dresser drawer and tied it around my head. I finished the beds as quick as I could and went out in the yard. I was feeling pretty anxious about my hair. Joe was swinging in the swing and I went out where he was and sat down on the sidewalk.

I wanted to tell him what I had done, but I thought I better not.

"What's that thing on your head for?" Joe asked me after a while.

"To keep the dust out," I told him.

I sat there and wondered how long it would take the hair to grow. I wish now I had left it alone, I thought. Or anyway I wish I hadn't cut off so much, or used sharper scissors. But it's too late to do anything about it now.

We had sandwiches for lunch because my mother was too busy to cook anything. We ate them on the back steps. My mother seemed to be thinking about the house-cleaning she was doing, and she didn't seem to notice my head.

"Can Joey go to my music lesson today?" I asked her.

"Yes, I guess so if he'll behave himself," she said.

After lunch I got ready and I helped Joe get ready. Then I went in my room and shut the door and took off the handkerchief and put on my hat. You couldn't tell that there was anything wrong unless you looked close, because I pulled the hat down over my face as far as it would go.

I got the exercise book and "The Happy Huntsman" off the piano and Joe and I went down to the street car track and got on the car. Joe stood up by the motorman and he stared at everything the motorman did. He stuck his head almost under the motorman's arm to see how he ran the car.

"Move, boy!" the motorman would say every few minutes looking mad at Joe.

I sat on the end seat in the front of the car, and I thought I ought to try to make Joe sit down like he was supposed to do, but I felt too discouraged. I sat there and thought about my troubles. I thought how Mrs. Rainwater was going to be mad about the bad lesson I was going to have and whether Joe would act right when we had our pictures taken, and whether somebody would find out about my haircut before it had time to grow.

Finally we got downtown and we went to the second floor of the Lewis and Jones Music Store to Mrs. Rainwater's studio. It was called a studio but it was just a room with a piano in it and some chairs and some pictures on the walls of some of the children Mrs. Rainwater gave music lessons to. My picture wasn't there because I hadn't had one taken since I was little and even if I had Mrs. Rainwater wouldn't want to hang it up because nearly every time I took my music lesson she said I was the worst pupil she had.

"Well, Helen," she said when we came in. She didn't look very glad to see me. "Is this your little brother?" she said.

"Yes. Sit down, Joe," I said.

Joe sat down and stared at Mrs. Rainwater. He had never seen her before. She was a nervous little woman and she wore sort of floppy clothes. She almost always frowned the whole time I was there, but sometimes she smiled a little when I brought her a check from my father.

"Well, Helen," she said again. "I hope you've practiced faithfully this week, because next week is the recital and I am anxious for everybody to make a good showing."

I sat down on the bench and she sat down too, and she opened the exercise book at page 10, and I started playing it. I could hardly see the notes for my hat.

Mrs. Rainwater sat there and counted for a while, then she just sat and let her breath out loud all while I was playing.

Finally she said, "Take your hat off, Helen. How can you hope to do anything with it flopping down in your face like that?"

"I can't take it off. I have to keep it on."

"Nonsense," she said. "Why do you have to?"

"Because I've got a bad cold," I said. "It might get worse if I took my hat off."

"I never heard anything so silly," Mrs. Rainwater said, acting mad and nervous. "Go on then. I don't suppose it would make any real difference anyway. As far as that goes I don't suppose you'd do any worse blindfolded than you would looking right at the page."

After a long time I finished the exercise and Mrs. Rainwater told me to play my piece. I started "The Happy Huntsman" the best I could. I tried to play it fast, but I made too many mistakes that way, so I slowed down some. Mrs. Rainwater kept moving around on the bench and groaning a little. "Oh God," she said once.

I was starting on the second page and just then Mrs. Rainwater gave a loud moan and said, "Stop, Helen."

"Don't you want me to finish it, Mrs. Rainwater?"

"You've already finished it," she said. "Helen, do you know what the word Time means? Do you know what the word Three Four Time means? The way you play it it

sounds like nothing on God's green earth. How in the world do you expect to get up there before an audience next week no better prepared than you are? What do you think people are going to think if I let you sit there and drive them crazy with a performance like that?"

"I don't know," I said after a while.

"All I see to do is for you to play the bass and I'll play the treble," Mrs. Rainwater said after looking mad at me for a few minutes. "Maybe that won't be too great a strain on you. Take it home and practice the bass and count three every time before you hit the next note. Can you remember that?"

"Yes ma'am," I said.

"God help us both!" Mrs. Rainwater got up and slammed a few books on the table. "All I can say is every dollar your father spends on your music is just water going down the drain."

"My mother wants me to be a music teacher when I'm grown," I told Mrs. Rainwater. "That's why they want me to learn to play the piano."

Mrs. Rainwater started to say something and then she shut her mouth and I thought I better go before she remembered about writing the note. "Goodbye," I said. "Come on, Joe."

All the way out the door Joe kept his head turned staring back at Mrs. Rainwater.

"What makes her act so mad?" he asked me when we got down to the street.

"Because I have bad lessons," I told him. "Now we're



—kept groaning a little

going to the store and papa's going to take us to have the surprise made."

We went over on Market Street to Henson's Hardware Store where my father worked. He was waiting on a customer, and he looked sort of surprised when he saw us coming.

"Don't you remember, papa?" I asked him. "We're supposed to have our picture taken for mother's Mother's Day present."

"Oh yes," he said. "You'll have to go by yourselves though. I'm too busy."

"We have to have the coupon," I said.

He took all the things out of his pocket and found the coupon, and after a long time I got Joe to come on and go with me and we went down the street to the People's Studio. The window was full of pictures and in one window there was a big picture of an old white-haired lady with a kind smile on her face looking at a picture of her children and underneath her a sign said, "Remember Mother. She Remembers You."

"What are we going in here for?" Joe asked when we started in the door. He pulled back a little.

"Come on, Joe," I told him. "We're going to have our picture taken. It's not going to hurt you. Come on now and act like you're supposed to."

Joe came but he came slow and he looked like he was about to be stubborn.

A girl came out of a back room chewing some gum and took the coupon. She told us to come with her and we went, and there was a big picture on the wall of some trees

and bushes and a fountain. The girl told us to sit down on a bench in front of it.

I sat down and I pulled Joe down too.

"Don't you want to take off your hat, honey?" she asked me, going over to the camera.

"No," I told her. "I have to keep my hat on."

"You'd look better without it, honey. It's going to cast a shadow over your face."

"I have to keep it on anyway," I said.

"All right, suit yourself," she said. Her voice sounded a little mad. "Little boy, you'll have to sit up straighter than that. Get your head up now, and look into the camera."

But Joe kept letting his head droop down until it almost touched his knees. "Sit up, Joe," I told him, but he wouldn't mind me.

The girl started chewing her gum fast. "Listen, honey," she said after a while. "Let's you put your arm around him and sort of hold him up. I can't just stand here and wait for the spirit to move him."

So I put my arm around Joe's shoulder and held him up a little and the girl said, "Now look this way and smile, little boy," but Joe kept looking down at his feet and what you could see of his face was not smiling.

"Sometimes he gets shy," I told the girl. "But he's not as bad as he used to be."

"I'd hate to see him like he used to be," the girl said partly under her breath.

"All right, honey, you smile," she said out loud to me. "I'm going to have to take it now. I can't wait any longer."

The camera gave a click. "That's all," she said. .

"Joe, why didn't you sit up and look at the camera like that girl said?" I asked him when we were starting back to the store. "You always have to ruin everything. What do you want to do that way for?"

Joe didn't say anything. He kept walking slow, looking in the windows. There's no use talking to him, I thought.

When we got home that night I looked in the mirror to see if my hair had grown any, but if it had I couldn't tell it.

I tied the handkerchief back around my head and ate supper that way, and once my mother asked me why I had it on, but just then Joe turned over the gravy and she forgot to ask any more. And the next day was Friday and I wore my hat in school and everybody stared at me, but not as much as they would have stared if they saw how my hair looked.

All day Saturday I wore the handkerchief tied on my head and my mother was too busy housecleaning to ask me about it, so I stopped worrying so much.

Every time I had a chance that day I went to the telephone and called my father to remind him to bring the picture, but finally he told me to stop calling him because he was too busy to keep answering the telephone.

"All right," I said. But I hope he remembers, I thought. It would be awful for us not to have anything for her on Mother's Day.

That night when my father came home he had the picture. My mother was in the kitchen, so we looked at it.

"I don't think they did a very good job," my father said taking it out of the envelope. "The colors are too artificial looking, and besides, it's not posed right. It's not natural enough."

It didn't look so very good, like my father said. You couldn't see much of my face because of the hat, and all you could see of Joe was the top of his head and a piece of his blouse and his legs, because he was hiding his face on his knees almost.

"Well, anyway it's better than a handkerchief," I told my father. "And anyway you can sort of tell what we looked like."

"Yes," my father said. "Only you'd think they could do better than that. They're supposed to be professionals. I could do that well myself, and I'm only an amateur."

I took the picture upstairs to show to Joe before I wrapped it up.

"See, Joe," I told him. He was counting his cold drink bottle caps and he would hardly look at it.

"I see it," he said.

"It would look better if you had done what that girl said," I told him. "All you had to do was hold up your head and smile. You look sort of funny all bent over like that."

"I don't care," Joey said. He started crawling under the bed to find a bottle top.

The next morning just before breakfast when I was setting the table I put the package at my mother's place.

She didn't seem to notice it when she put the cereal around, but when we all sat down, then she saw it, and

she looked surprised. "What's this?" she said.

"It's a Mother's Day present," I told her, "and it's not a handkerchief. It's something from Joe and me for you to keep in the living room."

"I can't imagine," she said, beginning to untie it.

"It's a picture," Joe said after a minute.

"Hush, Joe," I said.

But just then she got the paper off and she saw for herself that it was a picture.

"Mercy," she said.

"It's a picture of Joe and me," I told her. "A lady came around with a coupon and papa gave us a dollar. That's why."

"They should have done better than that," my father said, looking at it. "It don't look like professional work to me."

"What happened to Joe?" my mother asked.

"He acted stubborn," I said. "He wouldn't do what the girl said. He just about ruined it, but I think it looks pretty good. Don't you?"

"Yes," my mother said. "Thank you very much."

"You're supposed to keep it in the living room," I told her. "And when we're grown up you're supposed to look at it and remember how we were."

"I see," my mother said. She kept looking at the picture. "What's your hat pulled down like this for, Helen, why didn't you push it back the way it belongs?"

For a minute I couldn't think of a good reason. "I just didn't," I said.

My mother looked hard at me. "I thought there was

something funny about the way you've been going around with your head tied up," she said. "All right, let's see what you've done to your hair."

"I didn't mean to. The scissors slipped. I just wanted to look good to have my picture taken."

"Let's see it," she said.

I untied the handkerchief very slow. "I don't guess you'll like the way it looks," I told her. I took the handkerchief off.

My mother gave an awful groan. For a minute she didn't say anything. "What did you use, the hedge clippers?" she asked me after a while.

"You shouldn't have done that," my father said, starting to drink his coffee. "You're old enough to know better."

Joe looked at my head once, then he began to eat his biscuit and honey.

"You're going to be a pretty thing at Mrs. Rainwater's recital next week," my mother said, looking disgusted at me. "We'll certainly feel proud of you sitting up there looking like a picked chicken."

"I knew you'd be mad," I told her. "I thought you would be."

"Of course I'm mad!" my mother said. We ate the rest of our breakfast without anybody saying anything.

"I guess I better get ready for Sunday School," I said as soon as I had finished. I started to go toward the bathroom.

My mother got up and started scraping the plates. "Sometimes I feel almost like quitting," I heard her say

partly to herself as I went out the door.

I felt sort of surprised. I thought everybody thought it was wonderful to be a mother, I thought. That's why we have Mother's Day.

"Sometimes I almost wish I'd kept on working and not done this," she said. "Sometimes I think it would have been better."

"You do?" my father said, stopping chewing and looking sort of shocked.

"Well, sometimes," my mother said.

R E C I T A L

MRS. RAINWATER'S RECITAL

was going to be on Saturday. All of the children over twelve were going to have theirs at night, and all the ones under twelve were going to have theirs in the afternoon. It was going to be in the auditorium over the Lewis and Jones Music Store.

My mother seemed to be sort of worried about how I was going to do at the recital. The week before she made me practice "The Happy Huntsman" for about three hours every day. She made me a pink voile dress and had some new heels put on my shoes. Two or three times I started to tell her that I was only supposed to play the bass, but I thought that might make her feel bad, so I thought I would wait till the recital came, and let her find out for herself.

Thursday afternoon when I had my music lesson Mrs. Rainwater shut her eyes and groaned some, but not as much as usual, so I thought I must be doing better.

When my lesson was over Mrs. Rainwater said, "Well, Helen. All I know to tell you to do is do your best and practice all you can before Saturday afternoon, and

maybe you'll get by. And above everything else be sure to get there by three o'clock sharp. I want all the children seated on the front row so they won't have to straggle up from all over the hall when their names are called. Do you understand about the hour now, and everything? Do you want to ask me any questions before you go?"

"Yes," I said. "Mrs. Rainwater, if they clap for me to come back and play some more like people do sometimes, what could I play then?"

"That's something you won't have to worry about," Mrs. Rainwater said.

Friday night my mother rolled up the half-cut hair on some rubber curlers so it wouldn't look so awful.

"Do you think the people will notice it?" I asked her.

"Notice what?" my mother said.

"My hair. How funny it looks."

"Unless they're blind they will," my mother said. She kept frowning while she rolled it up. Once she made an awful face.

"What's the matter?" I asked her.

"My tooth gave an awful jump just then," she said. "It needs filling."

When I went to bed I could hardly sleep any because of the curlers. It felt like they were digging holes in my head. I had a dream where I was sleeping on a bag of rocks, and when I woke up from that one I had another where I was sleeping on a bag of nails. Both of them were awful.

In the middle of the night I got up to go to the bathroom and my mother was in there putting some tooth-ache medicine on her tooth.

"Does it hurt?" I asked her.

"It doesn't only hurt," she said. "It feels like the top of my head is coming off."

I felt sorry for her and I stood there and looked at her. I didn't know anything to do.

"Go to bed, Helen," she said.

I went to bed and dreamed that somebody was pulling my hair out one at a time. The next time I woke up it was morning.

At the breakfast table my mother chewed down on a piece of bread and all of a sudden she gave a jump. "Ouch," she said.

"You better go to the dentist," my father told her. "There's no use going on suffering like that."

"I guess I'll have to," my mother said. "I thought I could put it off till after Helen's recital, but I don't believe I can."

She went to the telephone and called the dentist. When she hung up she said, "The only time I could make an appointment was for two this afternoon, but the girl said I could come on up and wait my turn and he might get to me this morning. So that's what I'll do. Helen, while I'm gone I want you to practice an hour and a half by the clock. I'll take Joe with me and get him out of your way."

"Can I take off these curlers now?" I asked.

"No, they have to stay on till the last minute," she said.

"They feel like they're pulling my hair out by the roots," I told her. "I don't believe I can get my mind on music

"You'll have to," my mother said.

When they were gone I put the clock on the piano where I could see it and I started practicing. The time seemed very long. Every few minutes I would stop practicing and listen to see if the clock had stopped, but it hadn't. I practiced almost an hour, then I thought I would rest awhile and get some fresh air. I went out and swung in the swing. While I was out there the phone rang. It was my mother.

"Helen," she said. "The dentist can't take me till after lunch. I'm going to stay up here and this is what I want you to do. I want you to meet me in front of Lewis and Jones Music Store at two forty-five. Take a bath and put on your new dress. We can go to a restroom somewhere and comb your hair. Don't forget your music."

"I won't," I said.

"Get that dime out of the dish in the kitchen cabinet for car fare."

When my mother finished talking to me I went in the kitchen and looked in the cabinet and there was the dime. I put it on the table where I would be sure to remember where it was. Then I looked to see what I could eat for lunch. There wasn't anything in the ice box but some milk and apple sauce and two or three cooked pork chops.

"I wish we had something good," I thought.

Just then I heard somebody yelling, "Helen," in front of the house. When I went out there it was Sadie Hale from down the street. She was pulling along a medium sized baby in a little red cart.

"What are you doing, Helen?" she asked me.

"I'm getting ready to cook myself some lunch," I said.
"My mother is gone and I've got charge of the house."

I went out on the sidewalk. "Who is that baby?" I asked her.

"It's my little cousin, Shirley Ann Doughty. She lives



A medium sized baby

in Maryville," Sadie said. "Aunt Mabel came to spend the day with us."

The baby sat there and sucked its thumb and looked at us.

"How old is she?" I asked Sadie.

"Sixteen months and ten days," Sadie said. "She kept getting into things so Aunt Mabel said to take her for a walk. She was driving Aunt Mabel crazy."

"Can she talk?" I asked.

"I don't know if she can or not," Sadie said. "But I never heard her say anything."

"Maybe she's deaf and dumb if she can't talk," I told Sadie.

"She may be deaf, but she's not dumb," Sadie said.
"She makes noises."

The baby kept staring at me. It looked like it was thinking something about me, but I didn't know what.

"You can bring her in the house if you want to," I said.

Sadie got the baby out and helped her walk up the steps and I pulled the cart up on the front porch. When Sadie turned the baby loose the baby ran over to the porch swing and threw all the pillows on the floor.

"See, that's the way she does," Sadie said.

We went in the kitchen and Sadie sat down on a chair and watched me get the lunch. The baby went in the bathroom and all of a sudden there was a loud crash. We hurried in there to see what it was. She had pulled the scarf off of the dresser and all of the bottles and things had fallen on the floor and some of them were broken and medicine was coming out of them. The baby was standing there putting a piece of soap in her mouth.

"See," Sadie said. "That's why Aunt Mabel didn't want her to stay in the house."

Sadie took the soap away from the baby and I picked the things off of the floor and wiped it up.

"You better hold her on your lap," I told Sadie when we went back in the kitchen. "My mother might not like it if she came home and found all the dishes broken."

"I can't hold her, she wiggles too much," Sadie said. The baby was going around the kitchen picking up things and putting them in her mouth. "Maybe she's hungry," I said. I looked in the ice box to see if there was anything she could eat.

"Does she like pork chops?" I asked.

"I'm not supposed to let her eat anything," Sadie said, "but she does anyway, so you might as well give her one. Maybe it will keep her from getting into things."

So I gave her a pork chop and she sat down on the floor to eat it. She dropped it on the linoleum two or three times, then she picked it up and chewed on it.

"She ought not to do that, she'll get germs," I told Sadie.

"I can't help if she does," Sadie said. "I can't do anything with her."

I made some cocoa and in a minute Sadie said she would make some goldenrod eggs like she had learned to cook at her grandmother's. While we were cooking the baby stayed very quiet, but when we were putting the things on the table she finished eating the pork chop and she threw the bone across the room and got up and began to pull the table drawer open and throw the things out that were in it.

"Stop that, Shirley Ann," Sadie said.

The baby didn't stop.

"Just so she don't break anything," I told Sadie. "It's all right for her to open the drawer and get the knives and forks out, because she can't hurt them."

I was pouring out the cocoa into some cups, and Sadie was in the dining room making some toast, and all of a sudden the baby got quiet and I turned around to see what she was doing. When I saw what it was I ran to stop her, but it was too late. She had got the dime I had put on the table, and she had put it in her mouth, and just as

I got to her to take it away she gave a swallow and it was gone.

"Sadie, come here," I yelled. "Your little cousin has swallowed my dime."

Sadie came hurrying in there looking a little scared.

"It was my carfare," I told her. "I was supposed to go to the recital with it."

Sadie hurried over to the baby and held her and pried her mouth open.

"She swallowed it all right," I said. "I saw it going down her."

"I guess I better take her home," Sadie said, taking off the apron she had on. "Aunt Mabel always gives her mashed potatoes when she eats something like that that she's not supposed to."

I followed them out to the door. "I don't know now how I can get to the recital," I said. "That was the only dime I had."

Sadie put the baby in the cart and started bumping it down the steps.

"Maybe they'll let you ride for nothing if you tell them how it was," she said.

I don't believe they'd do that, I thought, watching Sadie pushing the baby down the walk. I guess I better call my mother.

I called the dentist's office but the lady said my mother was in the chair and couldn't come. I called my father, but he had gone to lunch. I thought once I would call Mrs. Rainwater, but I knew that what she would do would be to groan and talk rough to me over the phone.

I've got to think of something by myself, I thought. I looked at the clock. It was twenty minutes after two. All I can do is to get ready right quick and walk, I decided. It's only about four miles.

I drank the cocoa so I would have strength. I took a bath and put on the pink dress. I undid my hair from the curlers and combed it the best I could. Then I got my piece off of the piano and started to the recital.

At first I walked fast, but after I had gone about ten blocks I slowed down. I began to get hot and the sweat began to run down my face, and every time I passed a drugstore I went in and asked them for a drink of water. They always gave it to me with a dirty look, but I didn't care much because I was so thirsty. Every time I passed a clock I looked to see what time it was. The time seemed to go very fast. When I got to the corner of Broadway and Central it was already twenty-five minutes to four.

I guess they're all sitting there waiting on me, I thought. I guess Mrs. Rainwater is beginning to get mad. She said the most important thing was to get there on time, and I'm already thirty-five minutes late.

I ran a block till I was out of breath, then I walked a block till I got my breath back. Whenever I passed a store window I could see myself. I looked pretty wild.

The clock on the bank building said ten minutes after four and the store next to the bank was Lewis and Jones. Even out on the sidewalk I could hear the piano. It was giving loud bangs like they have at the end of a piece.

They must have gone ahead and started, I thought. I hurried up the stairs as fast as I could. My shoestrings

were untied but I didn't take time to tie them. When I got to the top of the steps the doors of the auditorium were open, and I could see inside that a little girl was just getting down from the piano bench and the people were clapping, and Mrs. Rainwater was getting up with a polite smile on her face.

I was just starting to tiptoe in so I wouldn't disturb them, and all of a sudden Mrs. Rainwater looked out toward where I was. A kind of a wild expression came on her face for a minute, but she must not have seen me because then she gave a big smile to the people.

"And that concludes our program," she said, talking fast. "We hope you have all enjoyed it."

I felt very queer. I felt almost like fainting. You mean the recital is over, I thought to myself. How could it be when I wasn't here?

But all the ladies were getting up out of their chairs, and some of them were coming toward the door, and some of them were rushing up to Mrs. Rainwater, and Mrs. Rainwater was patting some of the children on their heads and talking excited to their mothers, so it must be over.

I went inside the room and stood back against the wall and stretched my neck to see if I could see my mother and Joe anywhere.

Finally I saw them coming out into the aisle, and she was looking sort of worried. I guess she wonders why I wasn't here in time, I thought. I better go tell her. I started over to where she was and just then she saw me coming. Her face changed from worried to mad.

"Helen Marsden," she asked me as soon as I got to where I could hear her, "why didn't you meet me like I told you to? I've been sitting here seeing you kidnapped or run over or God knows what. I didn't know what to think. I called the house a dozen times and nobody answered. What on earth happened to you?"

"A baby swallowed my carfare, so I had to walk," I told her.

"I never heard anything so silly," my mother said.
"What baby?"

"Her first name is Shirley," I said. "I don't remember her last name."

"Well, anyway that's no excuse," my mother said.
"Why didn't you borrow a dime from one of the neighbors?"

"You told me never to ask people for money," I said.

My mother gave a kind of a groan. "I know I did, but I didn't mean not to in an emergency like this. I thought you'd have sense enough to know that."

"Oh," I said.

"Look at you," my mother said groaning some more.
"You're a sight."

"I know it," I said. I began to feel terrible. I wish now I hadn't told Sadie to come in, I thought. If I'd known what was going to happen I wouldn't have. I walked all this way for nothing. I had my hair almost pulled out by the roots. I practiced a whole week and didn't even get to play. I might as well have stayed at home.

"Well, come on," my mother said, taking hold of Joe's hand. He was standing there staring at the people going

by. "We'll have to go over and apologize to Mrs. Rainwater."

Mrs. Rainwater had on a long black dress without any sleeves. She was standing in the middle of a lot of mothers, and they were all waiting to talk to her about their children. She was telling one mother about her little girl named Hazel.

"Yes indeed," she was saying to the mother who was looking very proud and red in the face. "Hazel has real talent. She's one of my very best pupils."

My mother stood back and waited for her to finish. She looked pretty nervous. I felt sorry for her, and I felt sorry for myself.

I guess Mrs. Rainwater will tell her now that I'm her worst pupil, I thought. She always said she was going to.

But when Mrs. Rainwater had finished talking to Hazel's mother and Hazel she turned around and saw us, and she kept a smile on her face.

"Well, Helen!" she said, looking down pretty kind at me. "What happened to you? We missed hearing you play."

"I'm awfully sorry, Mrs. Rainwater," my mother said. "Something came up that kept her from getting here. She lost her carfare."

"No, Shirley Ann swallowed it," I told my mother.

Mrs. Rainwater looked at me sort of queer.

Then she patted my mother on the arm. "Now don't you feel badly," she said. "Sometimes things happen that can't be helped."

"How is Helen getting along with her music?" my

mother asked her.

Mrs. Rainwater gave a little cough. "Well, there's much to be said for Helen. She has a sense of rhythm all her own."

My mother looked pleased. "I'm sorry she didn't get here in time to play," she said again.

"Oh, so am I," Mrs. Rainwater said. "It was a great disappointment to me too." But she didn't look very sad. She looked almost happy. She turned around to some more ladies that had come up to tell her about their children.

My mother and Joe and I went out of the auditorium.

I felt surprised. That's funny, I thought.

While we were waiting for the street car I tried to get my mother's mind off of what had happened.

"Did you get your tooth fixed?" I asked her.

"Yes," she said.

"I practiced like you told me to," I told her. "I looked at the clock."

"I'm glad to hear that," my mother said. She sounded sort of sarcastic. I thought I better not talk to her any more until she got over thinking about the recital.

All the way home I kept thinking about the way people are. I thought Mrs. Rainwater would be mad, I was thinking, but she didn't seem to be. You never can tell how things are going to turn out, I was thinking. You never do know how people are going to be.

M

OST OF OUR RELATIVES

lived in Nashville, but my father's Uncle Les and Aunt Bessie lived over on Victory Street in North Knoxville in a house that was seventy-five years old. Sometimes on Sunday afternoons we went over there to see them, and every summer Joe and I took our clothes and stayed for two or three days. They were very old, but I liked to go there because of all the things that were in the house. They had a cream pitcher made like a cow with her tail for a handle, and Aunt Bessie had a lot of salt and pepper shakers made like different things. Uncle Les had been in a camp during the Spanish American War, and he had some badges he had got at soldiers' conventions. His father had fought in the Civil War and Uncle Les had his uniform and the sword that he fought with and a hat with a burn on it where a bullet had hit. He had a Bible that his father had kept in his breast pocket during the Civil War, and once a bullet went in the Bible, and saved his father's life that way. Uncle Les kept all the things in a box, and Aunt Bessie made him keep the box up in the attic where she couldn't see it.

When Uncle Les showed us his father's sword we would have to go up there when Aunt Bessie wasn't looking. As soon as she found out where we were she would call us to come down. The reason she didn't like for Uncle Les to show us it or talk about the war was because his father had fought on the Northern side, and Uncle Les told us how good the Northern side had been. That made Aunt Bessie mad. She was for the South. Nearly every time we went to their house they would have an argument about the Civil War.

"Les Marsden, what makes you want to fill those children's heads with lies?" Aunt Bessie would say when we came down from the attic. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. What do you want to keep dragging the past up like that for?"

"I'm not filling their minds with lies, I'm telling them pure facts," Uncle Les would say. "They'll find it all in their history books at school. It's an education for them."

Then Aunt Bessie would give a kind of mad sound, and that would be the last thing Uncle Les would have a chance to say for a long time, because then Aunt Bessie would tell us about the war. She would tell how the Northern soldiers came through Knoxville and stole two of her mother's best quilts off of the clothes line and got all the silver spoons.

"The only spoon we had left was one my sister Effie had taken out to her playhouse to dig with," Aunt Bessie said, giving Uncle Les a dirty look. "And if anybody doubts my word I've got the spoon to prove it."

Uncle Les would open his mouth to say something,



Aunt Bessie would tell us about the war

but it wouldn't do any good because Aunt Bessie would go right on talking. The more she talked the louder her voice would get and the madder it would sound. "I remember mamma taking Flossie our old red spotted cow and hiding her back in the woods so the Union soldiers wouldn't get her," Aunt Bessie said. "They would have stole the milk out of us children's mouths if she hadn't done that. Mamma had to take a lantern out there and milk her in the middle of the night. That's the kind of army your Uncle Les's daddy fought in."

"Yes, but Bessie," Uncle Les would say, "you can't expect everything to be carried on nice and polite during a war. What kind of war would that be?"

"The Confederate soldiers were all gentlemen," Aunt

Bessie would tell us. "I remember I was standing by the gate once when the Confederate soldiers went by and one bent down on his horse and picked me up and rode me a piece up the road. He admired my golden curls. The Confederate soldiers didn't abuse helpless women and children."

"Bessie, you know that's a barefaced lie," Uncle Les would say. He would stammer and stutter and get red in the face. "You know good and well you weren't even born during the Civil War. You're sixty-five years old now and that makes you born two years after the war was over. So how do you figure it out that way?"

"Never mind, I was there," Aunt Bessie would say. "And I heard my papa talk."

Uncle Les would give a groan. "Well, anyway, the Union won the war, I guess you'll admit that, won't you? I guess that proves they were good soldiers anyway."

"They didn't win the war," Aunt Bessie would say, making her mouth look tight.

When Aunt Bessie said this Uncle Les always looked like he was going to faint.

"Now Bessie, that's ridiculous," he would say in almost a yell. "Everybody knows they did. What do you want to deny facts that way for?"

"They did win it, Aunt Bessie," I would tell her. "We learned about it at school in our unit on American History."

"I don't care anything about your unit," Aunt Bessie said. "The Confederates won the war and that's all there is to it. You can talk all day and all night and you can't

convince me. You can show it to me in black and white, and I won't believe it. The Confederates won the war and nobody can make me think anything different."

Then Uncle Les would run in the parlor to the book-case and get one of the books called "Ridpath's History of the World." He would get the volume that told about the Civil War and read the part out loud that told about Lee's surrender. There was even a picture of it, but Aunt Bessie wouldn't look and she wouldn't listen.

"You can save your breath," she would say, banging the plates around on the table while she cleared it up. "It's all wrong. I certainly ought to know more about it than some northern professor that wasn't even there."

Uncle Les would moan and groan under his breath. "Bessie, for the ten thousandth time I ask you how could you have been there when you were born in 1868? The war was over the twenty-eighth of June, 1865. Can't you understand simple figures?"

"Never mind, I was there," Aunt Bessie would say, going into the kitchen with the dishes. "If I wasn't how could I remember it so plain?"

Aunt Bessie would run the dishpan full of water very noisy to show that she was through arguing. Uncle Les would look very disgusted. He would go put Ridpath's History back on the shelf and then we would go out on the front porch and Uncle Les would sit there looking sad and disgusted. Every few minutes he would spit over the banister. Aunt Bessie didn't like for him to do that, so when he had been arguing with her he always did it to make himself feel better, I guess.

"Your Aunt Bessie is the stubbornest woman in Tennessee," he would tell Joe and me. "She's not only stubborn, she's pig-headed. You can't tell her anything."

I felt sort of sorry for Uncle Les. "What makes Aunt Bessie act like that, Uncle Les?" I asked him.

"Nothing in the world but pure cussedness," he said. "She gets it from her father's side. All the Harkleroads were like that. I've lived with Bessie Harkleroad for going on forty years now, and I've never been able to pin her down to anything yet. I've never been able to make her see the truth on any subject."

My brother Joe would nearly always get tired of listening to Uncle Les and he would go out in the back yard to play by himself, but I would sit there and Uncle Les would talk to me about Aunt Bessie.

"I remember we had an argument over the Bible on our wedding night," he said. "It was about the creation of Eve. I argued what any fool would admit that God created Eve out of one of Adam's ribs, and your Aunt Bessie argued that he didn't. We argued half the night. I showed her the exact words in Genesis, but still she wouldn't believe it. I tell you, it makes a man feel helpless to be around a woman like that for forty years."

Uncle Les would sit there and think. I guess he was thinking about all the trouble he had had trying to prove anything to Aunt Bessie. "If I could just get the best of her once I wouldn't care so much," he would say.

One summer when Joe was having his tonsils taken out I went over to stay with Uncle Les and Aunt Bessie for several weeks.

"Helen, honey, I'm glad you came this week," Aunt Bessie told me when we were eating supper. "The Daughters of the Confederacy are going to have a meeting here Wednesday afternoon, and you can pass the refreshments."

Uncle Les gave a kind of a snorting sound. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Bessie Harkleroad," he told her. "You're no more a Daughter of the Confederacy than I am. Your father didn't fight in the Civil War. I've heard your mother tell many a time how they hid him in the corn field every time anybody came looking for him to make him join up."

"We'll dress you up in a little hoop skirt that belonged to my sister Effie," Aunt Bessie told me without paying any attention to Uncle Les. "It's in her little brass-bound trunk up in the attic."

"You got in there on false pretenses," Uncle Les said. "God knows how you did it. You must have forged papers or something."

"I'm not going to argue about it," Aunt Bessie told him.

After supper was over I cleared up the table for Aunt Bessie, then I went out on the porch and sat there with Uncle Les.

"That's the most unreasonable woman in the state of Tennessee," Uncle Les said, spitting over the banister. "I've been trying to convince her for the last twenty years that her father didn't fight in the Civil War, but what good does it do? She's took those women in by some hook or crook. She hasn't got any more right to belong to their society than that rocking chair has. They're all

strangers to me and I haven't got any use for them anyway, but I hate to see them get fooled like that. I'm a good notion to put on my father's old Union uniform and walk in just to see what they say," he said, partly talking to himself.

Wednesday morning after breakfast Aunt Bessie started making a pound cake to serve the Daughters of the Confederacy that afternoon.

"Pound cake and wine, that's what we always served when mamma was alive whenever we had any sort of to-do," she said while she was sifting the flour. "I remember the first time I ever saw your Uncle Les he was standing there with a glass of wine in his hand and his riding boots on. I came down the stairs dressed all in white with a white rose in my hair. When he saw me he almost dropped his wine glass."

Uncle Les was standing by the sink about to get a drink of water. He slammed the glass down on the kitchen table, and he looked at Aunt Bessie with a kind of a glare.

"Damn it, Bessie, that's the last straw," he said. "I can stand so much, but I've stood enough. You know good and well that I met you at a Christian Endeavor meeting, and you know your mother couldn't stand the smell of alcohol. She prayed over me by the hour trying to make me give up beer. She was always handing out tracts. You got that out of some book. You're going to ruin your reputation some of these days; some day you're going to tell one too many."

"I certainly ought to know," Aunt Bessie said. "I saw

her make it with her own hands."

"She'd turn over in her grave if she could hear you talk," said Uncle Les. He went out on the front porch and spit over the banister a few times and bumped a chair around a little. I stood there and watched him.

"Let's take a walk, Helen," he said after a while. "I'd as soon try to explain anything to a tree."

We walked down the street and past Fessel's drugstore, and I stopped and looked at the ten cent bags of candy in the window but Uncle Les kept on going, sort of muttering to himself. We went on past the church and up a hill and we went through a part I had never been in before. I kept showing things to Uncle Les, but he didn't pay much attention to them. I guess he was thinking about Aunt Bessie and how she never would listen to what he said or believe what he told her. Every few minutes he would say something partly out loud. "Forty years," he would say, "and I've never been able to make her see facts." Then he would think a while. "I'd as soon try to reason with that sidewalk there as your Aunt Bessie," he would say.

I tried to think of something to cheer Uncle Les up. "Maybe she'll get over it someday," I told him. "Joe did. He used to be awful stubborn, but he got a little better. So maybe Aunt Bessie will."

"She's gone too long," Uncle Les said. "I should have put my foot down before it was too late."

But when we turned around to go back Uncle Les seemed to feel more cheerful. He stopped at the drugstore

and got me some jellybeans and himself some Brown Mule Chewing Tobacco. He seemed to forget about Aunt Bessie and the rest of the way he told me about when he was a boy and somebody gave him some green persimmons to eat.

When we got up on the front porch Uncle Les sat down in the rocking chair and I sat down on the steps chewing the jellybeans. Everything smelled good because of the cake Aunt Bessie was cooking. I was thinking how I would look wearing a hoop skirt and passing around the cake. I wished Joe was there to see me do it.

All of a sudden I thought I heard a loud crash from inside the house. "What was that, Uncle Les?" I asked him.

"What was what?" He was almost asleep.

"I heard something," I told him. "It sounded like a crash."

"I guess Bessie broke something in the kitchen," Uncle Les said, shutting his eyes.

I went into the kitchen. The cake was sitting on the table to cool, but Aunt Bessie wasn't in there. "Aunt Bessie," I said, looking in the pantry and the back yard and everywhere I could think of. I started to go upstairs and see if she was there. When I passed the door I said to Uncle Les, "I can't find Aunt Bessie."

"Don't worry," Uncle Les said. "She's around here somewhere."

"I thought I heard somebody screaming upstairs," I told him. "Maybe somebody is up there murdering her like they did that lady in the paper."

"Nobody would do that," Uncle Les said. "It wouldn't be any use if they did; they wouldn't be able to convince your Aunt Bessie she was dead."

But he got up out of his chair and went upstairs with me. The bumping got louder and so did the yells. I was scared. It was Aunt Bessie all right.

Just as we got to the top of the stairs a lot of plaster fell down in front of us from inside the bedroom. A hunk dropped down and almost hit Uncle Les in the head.

"Ouch," he said. Then we looked up at the ceiling and saw what had happened. There was a big hole in it and a foot was sticking through and a piece of a leg and they looked like Aunt Bessie's. Chunks of plaster kept falling from the hole. Every few minutes the foot would give a kick and plaster would fall all over the room. "Help, help," a voice came from over the ceiling. It sounded pretty faint.

"Somebody must be killing her up in the attic," I said. "We better go up there and see if they are or not."

I looked at Uncle Les and he was keeping standing there and a smile was beginning to spread over his face. "I told her," he said. "I told her fifty times not to go up there at her age, crawling around under the eaves, walking on that old plaster!"

Uncle Les started up the attic steps and he was still smiling sort of funny.

"Is that you, Les?" Aunt Bessie's voice came from way back under the eaves. "Come get me out of here."

Uncle Les seemed to be very calm. He went over to the place where the boards stopped and he sat down on a box and looked back where Aunt Bessie was.

"What are you doing back there, Bessie?" he asked.

"I was looking for the little old trunk that had my sister Effie's hoop skirt in it," Aunt Bessie said. "That's what."

Uncle Les kept on sitting there.

"I thought you never would get here," Aunt Bessie said. Every time she said something you could hear the plaster rattling down. "Come on, help me out," she said, sounding kind of mad.

"You're a pretty sight," Uncle Les said. "Sixty-five years old. You ought to be ashamed."

"I can't stay here all day," Aunt Bessie said, talking loud. "Get me out, and then you can fuss all you want to."

"A Daughter of the Confederacy," Uncle Les said, looking at her.

"Get me out," Aunt Bessie said in almost a yell.

"I want to ask you one thing first, Bessie," Uncle Les said. "Was your father in the Civil War?"

"No, I don't reckon he was," Aunt Bessie said. "Do you want me to fall the rest of the way through?"

"Did the Union Army beat the Confederates at the Battle of Appomattox?"

"I reckon they did," Aunt Bessie said. "I don't care whether they did or not."

"Which did God create first, Adam or Eve?"

"Adam, I reckon," Aunt Bessie said. Then she gave a scream. "I'm going through! Les, are you going to sit there talking like a fool while I go through this ceiling and maybe break my neck?"

"All right, Bessie." Uncle Les got up and began to

crawl back to where Aunt Bessie was stuck. "I just wanted to see if you could be made to admit facts." He pulled Aunt Bessie out and gave a loud grunting sound. "Keep your feet on the rafters," he said, "or you'll go through again."

When Aunt Bessie came out to where I could see her she had spider webs all over her hair and she was sort of limping.

"It's a funny thing what happened to that trunk," she said, looking around the attic. "I thought I put it back there, but maybe I put it on the other side. Anyway, I just happened to remember that Effie's dress wasn't in it after all. I gave it to that little Taylor girl to wear in a play at school."

"You mean I can't pass the refreshments then, Aunt Bessie?" I asked.

"Yes honey, you can pass them in your own clothes," Aunt Bessie said. "It would be more suitable to have you dressed up, but it's all right not to. Some of them do and some of them don't."

"Bessie, what did you want to take those women in like that for?" Uncle Les asked her when we were going down the steps. "That's not honest. What do you want to get into something you haven't got any right in for?"

"I'd like to know why I haven't got a right," Aunt Bessie said, giving Uncle Les a kind of a glare when we got down to the hall. "My grandfather Harkleroad fell in the Battle of Shiloh. What better right could I have than that?"

Uncle Les stood there and stared at Aunt Bessie, look-

ing like somebody had hit him.

"All right, I give up," he said after a minute. "It wouldn't be any use to tell you your grandfather Harkle-road died in his bed of a brain stroke four years after we married. So I won't waste my breath. One thing though, for forty years I've tried to get a sensible, reasonable statement out of you, Bessie, and to tell the truth I didn't think I'd ever do it. I guess I ought to be thankful that I finally got you to admit that I was right about Lee's surrender."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Aunt Bessie said, brushing the spider webs out of her hair. "When did I ever say a thing like that?" She looked sort of surprised at Uncle Les.

"In the attic," Uncle Les said, with his face getting red. "When you had your foot caught. You heard her, didn't you, Helen?"

"Yes you did, Aunt Bessie. I heard you," I told her.

"Well, you heard me wrong," Aunt Bessie said. "I must not have understood you. I must have thought you said it the other way around. You all go on outside now; I haven't got time to argue. I've got to sweep up all this mess."

I followed Uncle Les out to the porch. I wanted to say something that would make him feel better, but I didn't know what to say. Uncle Les sat there in the rocking chair. He seemed to feel too sad even to spit. I kept watching him and feeling sorry for him. And then I noticed that a funny expression had begun to come on his face.

"By God, I believe it's catching," he said, after a minute, staring at me sort of queer.

"What, Uncle Les?" I asked him.

"She's got me in such a fix I don't hardly know myself what's a fact and what's not. I swear, if somebody asked me all of a sudden who surrendered at Appomattox I don't know whether I could give them the right answer or not."

"It was Robert E. Lee, Uncle Les," I said. "You know that's right because it's in the books. They wouldn't put it in the books if it wasn't right."

"I can see her grandfather now stretched out in his coffin," Uncle Les said. "It could be some other old man I remember. No, in reason I know it was her grandfather, because he had a white mustache just like the picture hanging up in the parlor."

"If the South had won the war we would still have slaves," I told him. "And we haven't got any, so that proves the North won it."

"Yes," Uncle Les said. "That stands to reason."

He didn't say anything else. He just sat there and looked worried. I thought I better not talk to him any more, so I went in the parlor and got a book to read. It was a book of Aunt Bessie's and it was called, "Magnolia Blossoms, A Tale of the Old South."

At twelve o'clock that day we had lunch on the kitchen table. While we were eating it Aunt Bessie talked a lot, but Uncle Les didn't say anything. He didn't even seem to be listening. He just sat there chewing and looking dis-

couraged. As soon as lunch was over he got up and put on his hat and went somewhere.

Aunt Bessie went upstairs and in a little while she came down wearing her black lace dress and a pearl pin that had belonged to her mother. She looked at herself in the hall mirror with a pleased expression.

"This is the only one of my mother's jewels the Yankees didn't get," she said to me, fastening the pin on better. "And the only reason they didn't get it was because it was on my mother, and my mother was visiting in Greeneville at the time."

About two o'clock the Daughters of the Confederacy began to come up the front walk. Aunt Bessie met them at the door and showed them where the parlor was. They were all pretty old, and they all talked at the same time. For a while I stood at the door with Aunt Bessie, but finally I went in the parlor. Two of the ladies were walking around looking at the furniture in the room.

"What a beautiful old highboy," one of them said.

"Yes," Aunt Bessie said, coming in just then with some more ladies. "That's the only good piece of furniture we saved. I remember a great big strapping soldier was about to carry it out when my mother ran up to him. She was a little bit of a woman, she only weighed eighty-nine pounds, but she had the courage of a lion. She had a poker in her hand and her eyes were fairly blazing. 'Put that down!' she said in a commanding voice, and the soldier, if I remember right he was a captain, was so surprised that he set it down quick off his shoulder. 'Now put it in the corner where it belongs,' my mother said, looking him

in the eye. He was so impressed by my mother's spirit that he not only put it back, but he told his men not to take anything else. But they couldn't have taken anything even if they wanted to, because there wasn't anything left to take."

"Tsk, tsk," said the ladies sadly shaking their heads.

Aunt Bessie went to answer the front door and the two ladies went over and stood looking at Aunt Bessie's grandfather's picture. I went over to where they were.

"That's Aunt Bessie's grandfather," I told them. "He was in the Civil War."

They looked at me with a sort of shocked expression, almost as if I had said something bad.

"I think he was on the Southern side," I said in a hurry, but that didn't seem to make them feel any better. They kept looking at me more shocked than ever. Then they looked at each other as if they could hardly believe what I had said.

After a while one of them asked, "You mean to say you don't know which army your Aunt's grandfather fought in?"

"I'm not sure," I told her. "But Aunt Bessie thinks he fought for the Confederates, so I guess he did."

Just then Aunt Bessie came in with a very old lady. She had white hair and a black velvet ribbon pinned around her neck. Aunt Bessie was smiling very excited. She took the old lady around the room and began introducing her to all the Daughters of the Confederacy. When she got to where we were the two ladies looked funny at Aunt Bessie and drew back from her a little, but

Aunt Bessie didn't seem to notice it.

"This is Mrs. Luella Witt of the Chattanooga chapter," she told them. "I know you all will be interested in meeting her, because her father was a fifth cousin of General Beauregard."

"It's a very great pleasure," the two ladies said. They didn't look at Aunt Bessie. They took Mrs. Witt over to the sofa, and Aunt Bessie stood there a minute looking pleased at her, then she went back to the door.

As soon as she sat down Mrs. Witt started telling them what she remembered about the Civil War. She said she couldn't remember much because she had only been three years old when it was over. "But I remember enough to feel that it was the ruination of the South," she said. "Not that I'm bitter, because I'm not. Still, I suppose there must be a wound that time can't heal lingering underneath like there is in most true southerners of my generation, because the mere sight of a Union uniform even now brings it all back to me."

I didn't hear any more because about that time Aunt Bessie came to the door and motioned to me to come out in the hall. "Helen," she said. "The meeting is about to start now and while it's going on I want you to go out in the kitchen and count out eighteen cups and saucers. Then they'll all be ready when it's time for the refreshments. Where's your Uncle Les?"

"I don't know," I said. "I haven't seen him."

"Count out eighteen little plates, too," she said. "Get the ones in mamma's set. The ones with rosebuds on them."

I went in the kitchen and started counting the cups. While I was there Uncle Les came in through the back door. He looked pretty sad and he smelled sort of beery. He sat down on the edge of a chair and watched me for a few minutes.

"Bessie's mother would turn over in her grave if she knew who was going to eat off her plates," he said after a while. "Her mother's folks were from New England, and she aways did favor the North."

He was quiet for a while, and then he said, "Bessie Harkleroad is having the time of her life. She's sitting in there telling lies to those women and enjoying herself. It ain't right. I'm a good notion to teach her a lesson."

"How, Uncle Les?" I asked.

"Never you mind," he said. "You'll see."

Uncle Les went up the back stairs muttering as he went and I kept on counting the cups and saucers. I counted them several times to make sure. After a while Aunt Bes sie came hurrying into the kitchen. "I'm going to make the coffee now," she said tying on her apron. "I happened to think this morning that some of the ladies are members of the W.C.T.U. so it wouldn't do to have anything stronger even if we had some in the house. You can be putting the cake on the plates, honey, and taking it in."

I was going through the hall with some plates of cake when I happened to look up and there was Uncle Les at the top of the stairs. He was wearing his father's uniform. He had the sword buckled around his waist and the hat with the bullet hole on his head.

"Where are you going, Uncle Les?" I asked.

"I'm going to cure Bessie Harkleroad of her dishonest ways," he said. He began to laugh a little. "By God, I want to see their faces. They'll think I'm the devil himself. They'll put your Aunt Bessie out of their club so fast after this it'll make your head swim."

For a minute I stood there and watched him coming down the stairs, then I took the cake in the parlor and gave it to the two ladies nearest the door. Then I waited to see what would happen when Uncle Les came in.

The ladies were all talking pretty loud to each other, and they must not have noticed him at first. He stood in the doorway a minute, then he cleared his throat and the lady sitting closest to him looked up and made a funny sound. Then all the ladies saw Uncle Les. They stopped talking. Some of them kept their mouths open just like they had been when they saw him.

For a minute Uncle Les just stood there, then he went over to an empty chair and sat down in it. He sat up very straight and looked all around the room with a polite expression.

After a minute some of them closed their mouths and a few of them tried to go on talking again, but they would say a few words and then stop and all the time they kept their eyes on Uncle Les. They looked as if they were sitting on the edge of their seats ready to run if he started toward them. But Uncle Les seemed very calm. He turned to the lady next to him; it was Mrs. Witt. "You don't object to visitors, do you?" he asked her smiling.

Mrs. Witt was breathing hard and she looked pretty pale. She didn't say anything. "I see you're looking at my

uniform," Uncle Les said, looking down at it himself. All the other ladies stopped trying to talk and listened. Uncle Les took off his hat. "See that," he said to Mrs. Witt, pointing to the hole. "A Confederate soldier shot a minie ball through there and just barely missed my father's head. It was a good thing for my father the Confederates were such poor shots. An inch lower, my father used to tell my mother, and you would have been a widow after Shiloh." Uncle Les laughed a little, but nobody else did. They began to look a little mad. Uncle Les reached in the breast pocket of the coat and pulled out the New Testament. "All the way through to Revelations," he said, holding it up and showing them the hole. "One thing the Civil War did for my father was make him a Christian. He was an unbeliever before the war, but my mother made him take this testament with him when he left home. He carried it fourteen months without opening it, but after it stopped that rebel bullet he joined the Presbyterian church and held family prayers every night and morning without missing a day for forty years. He died as holy a man as you would find in the state of Tennessee."

Just then I heard Aunt Bessie calling me from the kitchen so I went in there. She was pouring the coffee into the cups.

"Aunt Bessie," I said. "Uncle Les is in the parlor."

"He is," she said sort of surprised. "What's he doing in there?"

"He's telling them about the Civil War," I said. "He's got on his father's uniform."

Aunt Bessie gave a scream and set down the coffee pot

with one hand and took off her apron with the other. She hurried as fast as she could go toward the parlor and I hurried after her. Uncle Les was still talking, but Aunt Bessie went over to him and took him by the arm. She looked sad at the ladies and shook her head. "Come on, Les," she told him in a kind voice. "Come upstairs and rest a while now." But Uncle Les jerked his arm away. "Damn it, Bessie, leave me alone," he said.

Aunt Bessie kept on pulling. She gave his arm a pinch where the ladies couldn't see. "Ouch," Uncle Les said.

"Come on, Les," she said again. "Come get your uniform off. You can put it on tomorrow if you want to."

Uncle Les gave her a mad look. "Oh no you don't, Bessie Harkleroad," he said, but just then Aunt Bessie pinched him again and I guess Uncle Les decided he had talked enough because he got up and went out of the room. We could hear him clumping up the steps to the attic.

When he had gone Aunt Bessie let out a long breath. The ladies sat back a little in their chairs, but they were looking at her in a funny way. Aunt Bessie's mouth drooped down into a sad expression.

"I hope he didn't startle you all too much," she said after a while.

None of the ladies said anything. Aunt Bessie kept looking sadder and sadder. She looked like she was going to cry. "It's a sad story," she said. She waited a minute, but still nobody said anything.

"It must have been you all coming today that got his mind working backward," she went on then. "You see when he was only twelve years old he enlisted in the Army

of Tennessee as a drummer boy. When the battle of Chickamauga was at its height the soldier next to Les was mortally wounded and as he fell he handed Les his gun. 'Use it in my place, son!' he cried in a ringing voice. So Les joined in the line of fire and in the heat of the battle he shot a Union soldier. He wasn't used to bloodshed and his conscience began to hurt him, so he dragged the wounded man over to some bushes out of danger of the bullets, and he gave him some water out of his own flask. The soldier was so grateful for the kindness that before he died he told Les to take his hat and uniform to remember him by. Les did, and although that was fifty years or more ago he never has been able to forget it. Every once in a while he has an attack where everything is mixed up in his mind. I don't know what all he told you, but it was all his imagination."

Aunt Bessie stopped and gave a low sigh. The room was very quiet. A few ladies were wiping their eyes, and Mrs. Witt was patting Aunt Bessie on the arm.

The two ladies who had looked at Aunt Bessie's grandfather were staring at her with a suspicious expression, but nobody seemed to notice them.

All of a sudden Aunt Bessie cheered up.

"Now I'll go get the coffee," she said. "And you all must try to forget about the whole thing!"

After the ladies had gone and it was beginning to get dark Uncle Les came downstairs wearing his own clothes. Aunt Bessie was in the kitchen washing the plates and cups and I was drying them. "Well, everything went off

fine," she was saying in a cheerful voice as Uncle Les came into the room. Then she gave him a dirty look. "But what did you go in there and act the fool like that for, Lester Marsden? I reckon you thought that was funny."

A smile began to spread over Uncle Les's face, but Aunt Bessie went on talking sort of dreamy. "I wouldn't be surprised if they elect me a delegate to the state meeting in Nashville next October. Several of the ladies asked me if I would be willing to go."

Uncle Les's jaw dropped down. "What?" he said.

Then Aunt Bessie seemed to remember him again. She gave him another mad look. "I had a pretty time explaining to them about you in that get-up," she said. "A little more and you would have spoiled the meeting. Next time you either wear your Sunday suit or stay in the back of the house out of sight!"

Uncle Les stood there staring at Aunt Bessie.

After a while he said, "Bessie Harkleroad, what did you tell those women?"

Aunt Bessie began to splash the cups and hum under her breath.

"I want to know what rigmarole you made up for them," Uncle Les said, his face getting red and his voice getting loud.

"I don't know what you mean," Aunt Bessie said in a dignified voice. "It's all over now anyway, so we won't talk any more about it."

She turned the water on as hard as it would go and started singing pretty loud. You could see Uncle Les's lips

moving but the noise drowned out what he was saying. You couldn't hear a word.

He stood there a minute longer then he gave the table leg a hard kick and stomped through the dining room and out onto the front porch and slammed the door behind him.

As soon as he was gone Aunt Bessie turned the water off. I looked over at her. She was smiling a little to herself.

AUNT BESSIE AND THE SPIRIT WORLD

O

NE DAY SOMEBODY THREW

a Ladies' Birthday Almanac on Aunt Bessie's front porch, and as soon as she read it, Aunt Bessie began doing everything by the stars. Every morning as soon as breakfast was over she would look in the almanac to see whether it would be a good day or a bad one. If the almanac said Do not start on a journey, Aunt Bessie wouldn't go outside of the yard. If it said Unfavorable to business transactions she wouldn't buy anything at the grocery store that day even if they were out of sugar or something.

This would make Uncle Les sort of mad. "Bessie, you make me tired," he would say. "You know as well as I do that stuff's a lot of tom-foolishness. There's no *reason* to it."

But Aunt Bessie kept on going by the stars no matter what Uncle Les said. There was a coupon in the back of the almanac and if you cut it out and sent it with a label off of a bottle of Dr. Hobson's Vegetable Laxative you would get another book that would tell you more. Aunt

Bessie sent for it. She found out that Uncle Les was born under the sign of the fishes, and that people born under that sign should be careful of their diet. So after that she wouldn't cook any more cakes or pies and Uncle Les had to eat tapioca pudding or jello for dessert. When she put it in front of him Uncle Les would give it a glare and push it away. "Damn it, Bessie," he would say. "I can't eat this stuff. It hasn't got any *body* to it. I want something I can chew. When are you going to stop this damn foolishness and come to your senses again?"

"Now, Les," Aunt Bessie would say. "You might just as well save your breath, because I'm not going to argue. I know what's best for you, and besides, when the planet Mars is ruling like it is now there's danger in quarrels and arguments."

Uncle Les would slam his spoon down and open his mouth to reason with Aunt Bessie, but it wasn't any use. She would go out and feed the chickens, or she would start singing so loud that she couldn't hear anything he said.

But the worst was that she tried to make Uncle Les stop chewing tobacco. One morning after breakfast he reached in his pocket for his plug of tobacco, and it wasn't there.

"That's funny," Uncle Les said, feeling in all his pockets. "I got a brand new plug of Brown Mule down at the drugstore last night. I hadn't even taken a chew off of it."

"Maybe you put it in your other pants, Uncle Les," I said.

"No I didn't. I remember . . ." All of a sudden he stopped and looked at Aunt Bessie. She was clearing up the table and humming a little under her breath.

"Bessie, where's my tobacco?" Uncle Les asked in a loud voice.

"What?" Aunt Bessie said, scraping the crumbs off of the table cloth.

"I said where's that brand new plug of Brown Mule that I got last night?"

"How should I know?" said Aunt Bessie, sounding very surprised.

"Don't try to deny it, you stole it out of my pants pocket. God damn it, Bessie, this is the last straw. I swear, when it gets to the place where a man can't even have a chew of tobacco without putting up a fight, things have gone too far."

Aunt Bessie acted very calm. "Now Les, don't excite yourself," she said. "Remember your heart."

"What are you talking about? My heart's as sound as a dollar. I've never had any trouble with my heart or my stomach either."

"The almanac says different," Aunt Bessie said, taking the dishes out into the kitchen. "Those born under the sign of Pisces are subject to heart spells, so you'll have to give up tobacco. I wouldn't be doing my duty if I stood by and let you injure your health."

Uncle Les gave a yell that I guess you could hear clear down to Fessel's Drugstore.

"No you don't, Bessie Harkleroad!" He glared at her. "A man in my fix has to have a few things in life to hang on to. If it hadn't been for my tobacco I couldn't have stood it as long as I have. You might as well give it back



—out of my pants pocket

to me, because if you don't I'm going right down there and get some more."

Aunt Bessie tightened up her mouth and began to sweep up the floor.

"I guess I know more about the condition of my heart than an almanac does," Uncle Les said, still sounding mad.

Aunt Bessie didn't say anything.

Then Uncle Les began to calm down some. He began to talk in a quieter voice, like he did when he tried to reason with Aunt Bessie.

"Now Bessie, use your common sense. Is it reasonable that everybody born on the same day would have the same ailments? Think of all the people all over the world, black and white and yellow and other colors. You mean to say that just being born on March the fourth will give all those people a weak stomach?"

"Never mind," Aunt Bessie said. "I know what I think."

"But Bessie, medicine teaches us different." Uncle Les's voice began to get loud again. "Any fool knows now that a body inherits things like that from their parents or grandparents. It's been proved a hundred times."

Aunt Bessie got her embroidery off of the sideboard and sat down by the window and began to rock. "You can save your breath, Les Marsden," she said. "I'm not going to argue any more till Mars moves out of Cancer."

Uncle Les gave a low moan. He started toward the front porch.

"Are you going to take a walk, Uncle Les?" I asked him. "If you are, I'll go with you."

We walked along the sidewalk toward the drugstore and all the way Uncle Les talked to me about Aunt Bessie.

"She don't believe that stuff any more than I do," he said. "Ever since before we were married your Aunt Bessie's been after me to smoke cigars instead of chewing. This is just an excuse to take away my rights."

"What does she want you to smoke cigars for, Uncle Les?" I asked him.

"Nothing but pure cussedness," he said.

Just then we got to the drugstore and Uncle Les went in and bought a plug of tobacco. "I know what I'll do," he said. "I'll fool her! I'll get two plugs and I'll sew a little pocket onto my union suit and keep one plug in it!"

This seemed to make Uncle Les feel a lot happier. He took a big bite out of one of the pieces of tobacco. "I've chewed since I was in short pants," he said, "and it's never done me any harm. Tobacco and alcohol in moderation never hurt anybody. It's been proved I don't know how many times."

When we got back to the house Aunt Bessie was on the front porch with her sewing. Uncle Les spit two or three times as we came up the walk, and he rolled the tobacco from one side of his face to the other, but Aunt Bessie didn't even look up.

I sat down in the swing, and Uncle Les went in the house. In a little while he came back out and sat down in the rocking chair. I could see a bulge under his shirt where the other plug of tobacco was hidden. He took a bite off the one he had in his pocket and sat there chewing

it, looking at Aunt Bessie, but she didn't pay any attention.

After a while Aunt Bessie said, "That's funny."

"What, Aunt Bessie?" I asked.

"I don't know when I've ever thought of Carter Brock before. I haven't thought of him for thirty years, I reckon, but all of a sudden he just came into my mind."

"Who is he, Aunt Bessie?" I said.

"He was a young man that courted me before I met your Uncle Les," said Aunt Bessie biting off a thread. "He came from down near Memphis. He always wore white linen suits winter and summer. It took a colored woman working all the time to keep his linen washed and ironed. He was a real southern gentleman."

"He sounds like a real southern fool to me," Uncle Les said, spitting over the banister.

"I can see him now, riding along on a coal black horse," Aunt Bessie went on, paying no attention to Uncle Les. "Its name was Charger. Carter loved that horse like it was human. He had a special silver bit made for it, and he kept a colored boy just to rub it down and feed it. Carter on that horse made a picture you'd never forget. I remember how folks used to come running out of their houses just to see Carter Brock ride by."

Uncle Les gave a kind of a snort.

"He was a wonderful young man," Aunt Bessie said, kind of dreamy. "He smoked handmade cigars from Havana. He never drank anything but rare old wine. He came from a fine old southern family."

"Why didn't you marry him then, if he was so wonder-

ful?" Uncle Les said in a sort of mad sounding voice.

"Because I was an ignorant young girl, I reckon," Aunt Bessie said, giving a loud sigh. "I didn't know my own mind then. If I'd known then what I know now I might have done different."

"What do you know now that you didn't know then?" Uncle Les asked, giving her a glare.

"According to the stars Carter Brock would have made me an ideal husband," said Aunt Bessie. "He was born under the sign of Leo the lion."

"He was born under the sign of the jackass if you ask me," Uncle Les said in a very loud voice. "I never heard of a bigger sounding fool. Why didn't you say something about him before now if you liked him so much? What did you wait forty years to tell about him for?"

"Some things are too sacred to talk about," Aunt Bessie said. "Besides, I believe in putting the past behind you. There's no use regretting what's already over."

"Where is he now, Aunt Bessie?" I asked.

"Well, honey, when I refused him he went off somewhere and never came back. I heard that he bought a plantation in Mississippi near Vicksburg, but I always thought that he went to South America and died down there of a fever."

Uncle Les's face was getting pretty red. He sat there for a while and stared hard at Aunt Bessie. She kept on embroidering with a sad expression.

"You're not fooling me any, Bessie Harkleroad," Uncle Les said after a while.

Aunt Bessie looked surprised. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"There never was any such a person and you know it as well as I do. You made the whole thing up."

"I certainly did not," Aunt Bessie said. "I can see him as plain as day. He had a black mustache and a little scar he got fighting in a duel on one side of his face."

"You made it up to try to get me to stop chewing," Uncle Les said. He looked almost like he was going to cry. "Bessie, it ain't normal. A woman your age ought to stick to the truth. If you don't it's going to get to the place where nobody will believe a word you say."

"I can't help it if they believe me or not." Aunt Bessie started talking very mad and fast. "I've always been as honest as the day is long. There certainly was such a person as Carter Brock. How could I describe him so well if there wasn't? I can tell you who his daddy was; he was old Judge Brock from Louisville, and his mother was one of the South Carolina Carters. I saw her many a time when I was a girl and visited in Jericho, Tennessee, in my cousin Lucy Belle Porter's home. People used to come from miles around to see her hair. She had long black hair that hung down to the floor, and she always carried a colored girl along with her just to comb it."

"Oh for God's sake," Uncle Les said, bouncing up out of his chair and kicking a footstool across the porch. "That's the last straw."

He started down the sidewalk limping a little. I started to go with him, but I thought I would stay and hear Aunt Bessie talk some more.

"Did she always wear her hair hanging down her back, Aunt Bessie?" I asked.

"Who, honey?" Aunt Bessie said.

"That lady, Carter Brock's mother that you were talking about."

"No," said Aunt Bessie. "Sometimes she wore it piled up on top of her head with flowers and vines trailing around it."

Aunt Bessie looked dreamy. "And she had a little glass bird that she wore sometimes on top."

"Didn't it look sort of funny?" I asked.

"Certainly it didn't!" Aunt Bessie looked at me kind of mad. "It gave her a very distinguished look."

She folded up her sewing and went into the house. I sat there a while and thought of what she had said.

The next morning at the breakfast table Aunt Bessie brought the biscuits in, and when she sat down at her place she had a funny kind of smile on her face.

"Well," she said finally to us. "You remember I was telling you all about Carter Brock yesterday? Well for some strange reason I dreamed of him last night."

Uncle Les took a biscuit and jabbed his knife into the butter. He rattled his plate some to show that he wasn't listening, but Aunt Bessie went on talking anyway.

"I thought he came into the room and stood at the foot of the bed. He had one of those cork hats on like they wear down in the jungle. I thought I said, 'Carter, is that you?' but he just stood there looking at me with a sad expression for a minute or two, and then he disappeared without a word."

"Is that all, Aunt Bessie?" I asked.

"Yes," Aunt Bessie said. "Now! I reckon that proves

there was such a person as Carter Brock," she said, giving Uncle Les a dirty look.

Uncle Les stopped eating. His jaw dropped down, and he looked like he was about to say something, but Aunt Bessie didn't give him a chance. "The more I think of it the more convinced I am that it wasn't a dream at all," she said. "It was Carter Brock himself, come back from the other world!"

Uncle Les gave a loud squawk and threw down the biscuit he was holding.

"Bessie Harkleroad," he yelled, "are you out of your head? How can you sit there and say a thing like that?"

"I always thought I had psychic powers," Aunt Bessie said, reaching for the preserves. "I remember once when I was just a young girl I had a dream of a hearse drawn by four black horses standing in front of my Aunt Minnie Tinsley's house, and inside of a year she was dead."

"What could you expect? She was ninety-four years old," Uncle Les said. He took a long breath and tried to make his voice calm. "Please, Bessie," he said. "Please try to use your reason and stop this damn nonsense. Next thing you know people are going to start talking. They're going to say your mind is affected."

"I can't forget that look on his face," Aunt Bessie said in a thoughtful voice. "He came here to tell me something, or there's something here he wants, one or the other."

All of a sudden Uncle Les got mad again. "If he came to get that extra plug of Brown Mule I had sewed to my underwear he can go back where he came from," he said. "I want to tell you right now I've chewed tobacco for

fifty years and no spirit's going to stop me."

He reached inside his shirt, and then he gave a yell.
"It's gone," he said.

I looked over at Aunt Bessie, but she was stirring her coffee very calm. Uncle Les looked around sort of wild for a minute, then he got up and went out. The front door banged behind him. But Aunt Bessie spread some more preserves on her biscuit and sat there eating it. She didn't seem to even notice that Uncle Les was gone.

For several mornings after that the first thing Aunt Bessie would do when we sat down at the breakfast table was to tell us about the dream she had had the night before about Carter Brock. "Only it wasn't a dream," she would say, looking at Uncle Les. "I'm as sure of that as I am that I'm sitting here."

The second day Uncle Les tried to reason with her, but it didn't do any good.

"You can say what you please," Aunt Bessie said. "But when the same thing happens two nights running, it means something."

"I swear," said Uncle Les when Aunt Bessie had gone in the kitchen for some more coffee. "I'm almost beginning to believe in him myself."

"You don't believe in ghosts, do you, Uncle Les?" I asked him.

"No, my mind don't." Uncle Les looked worried. "My reason tells me there couldn't be any such a thing. But Bessie seems so damned sure," he said partly under his breath. "There's something about the thing that gives me the creeps."

All the rest of that day he acted sort of nervous. He would sit on the porch a while, then he would walk around some, then he would sit some more. He had got himself another plug of Brown Mule but he didn't seem to get any pleasure out of having it. He would take it out and look at it, then put it back in his pocket without chewing it.

"But Uncle Les," I would say to him to try to cheer him up. "You said yourself that there wasn't any such person as Carter Brock. So how could he be dead if he never was alive?"

"I don't know," said Uncle Les, looking sort of discouraged.

By the third morning Uncle Les had stopped trying to prove anything to Aunt Bessie. He just sat there and looked sad and pale. He didn't even reach to see if his plug of tobacco was there. I guess he knew without looking that it wasn't.

Aunt Bessie seemed to feel very cheerful. "Three nights running," she said. "That's what happened when my Aunt Minnie Tinsley died."

Uncle Les gave a snort, but it sounded pretty weak. As soon as breakfast was over he went out and sat on the porch. I went with him because I felt sorry for him. He sat there without rocking, muttering to himself.

"It's beginning to get on my nerves," he said. "No matter what your reason tells you a body can stand just so much of a thing like that."

Late that afternoon Uncle Les got up and put on his hat and we went down to Fessel's Drugstore. When we got there Uncle Les went over to the tobacco counter and looked at the cigars. He kept picking them up, then put-

ting them down, looking disgusted. Finally he picked out three and gave the man a quarter. He put one in his mouth and lit it. All the way home he kept giving an awful frown every time he took a puff on it.

"What's the matter, Uncle Les?" I asked him.

"The thing hasn't got any taste," he said. "There's no kick to it."

When we got to the house Aunt Bessie was out watering the flower beds. As Uncle Les went past her he gave her a glare, but he didn't say anything. He bumped down in his chair on the porch, and he sat there holding the cigar in his hand without smoking it, looking sad and disgusted.

The next morning Aunt Bessie didn't say anything about Carter Brock. She seemed to have forgotten about him, and about the almanac and the book she had got through the mail too, because they stayed up on the mantel and the only time she moved them that day was to dust under them. That afternoon I had to go home, so I didn't see Aunt Bessie and Uncle Les any more for three or four weeks.

But one Sunday Aunt Bessie called my mother up and said she wanted us to come out and spend the afternoon because her Cousin Lucy Belle Porter from Jericho was visiting in town, and she wanted all the relatives to meet her.

When we got there Aunt Bessie's Cousin Lucy Porter was a small old lady with black eyes and a high voice and she talked nearly all the time. She sat on the edge

of her chair and told everybody about Jericho and all the people there. Everybody else had to be quiet and listen, so they all sat around with polite smiles on their faces except Joe and Uncle Les. Joe went out in the back yard as soon as we got there, and Uncle Les was sitting over by the window by himself, reading the paper.

While Aunt Bessie was in the kitchen getting some refreshments her cousin was telling about how the Jericho Methodist Choir leader threw a lamp at the preacher one night during choir practice.

"I happened to be sitting over in the high sopranos next to Carter Brock's wife at the time, and I made the remark to her that I thought it was disgraceful," she said.

Everybody was nodding to show that they thought so too, except Uncle Les. He had got to the funnies and he was looking at them, but all of a sudden he sat up straight and said in a loud voice, "What?"

"I said I thought it was a disgrace to deliberately ruin an expensive lamp like that, Les," Aunt Bessie's Cousin Lucy said. "The Ladies Aid had just finished paying for it, and the shade was broken into a million pieces."

"Yes, but who did you say it to?" Uncle Les asked, staring at her like he couldn't believe his ears.

"Alicia Brock, Carter Brock's wife," she said. "You may have heard Bessie speak of him. His father was my mother's fifth cousin and we grew up together. Carter Brock was as homely a boy as I ever saw in my life and he wouldn't say boo to a goose, but a better hearted boy never lived. I must remember to tell Bessie that Carter's a grandfather now. His boy Harry and his wife have a

fine baby girl." And then she went on talking about something else.

Uncle Les's face had been getting redder and redder. Now he got up from his chair and started toward the kitchen. I thought I would go too and get a drink of water, and see what Uncle Les was going to do.

Aunt Bessie was fixing some slices of cake on a tray. "Helen, honey, you can pass around the napkins," she told me. "Les, in just a minute you can take this in."

Uncle Les stood there and looked at her. She went on cutting the cake.

"You and your spirits," he said finally.

"What?" Aunt Bessie said.

"You and your damn southern gentlemen."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Aunt Bessie held out the plate of cake to him. "Here. Take this in."

But Uncle Les didn't take it. "I ought to have had more sense than to believe you. I ought to have had sense enough to believe my own better judgment."

"He means Carter Brock, Aunt Bessie," I told her, because she still didn't seem to understand. "He's not dead after all. Your Cousin Lucy Belle Porter just said he wasn't."

Aunt Bessie set the plate down on the table and looked at Uncle Les.

"There!" she said. "I reckon that proves it!"

Uncle Les's jaw dropped down. He looked very surprised.

"You said I made Carter Brock up." Aunt Bessie began to get mad. "You the same as called me a liar. Maybe

after this you won't question every remark I make!"

Uncle Les stared at Aunt Bessie a minute, then he gave a kind of a moan and started out the back door.

"I'll be back, Aunt Bessie," I said, going after him.

He went around the house and down the street and he was talking to himself as hard as he could. I almost had to run to keep up with him.

"Are you going down to Fessel's Drugstore, Uncle Les?" I asked him. "Are you going to start chewing Brown Mule again?"

Uncle Les didn't answer me. He pulled two cigars out of his pocket and threw them down as he went.

When we got to the drugstore Uncle Les reached into the show case and got a plug of Brown Mule and bit off nearly half of it in one bite.

"Will you have some cigars today, Mr. Marsden?" the clerk asked.

Uncle Les gave him a glare and threw a dime on the counter. "No!" he said.

Uncle Les's jaws moved very fast, chewing, all the way home, but he didn't say anything for a long time.

Finally he rolled his tobacco to the other side of his face, and he began to shake his head slowly and talk to himself. "I never will understand it, not if I live a hundred years. I won't know any more what to expect than I do now. No matter how long I live, it will always be a puzzle to me."

"What, Uncle Les?" I asked him. "What will?"

"The way your Aunt Bessie's mind works," he said very sad, spitting.

L I G H T B E A R E R

T

HE LITTLE LIGHT BEARER'S

missionary society met every month in the basement of the Mississippi Avenue Methodist Church. It was for children from six to twelve, and what we were supposed to do was to save up our money and put it in a little box called a Mite Box. Every year the mite boxes were opened and the money that was in them was sent to the missionaries in Africa. It was to buy Bibles and things like that.

Mrs. Pedigo was the leader of the Little Light Bearers. She was a skinny woman, and she looked sort of wild. Her eyes glared, and she wore her hair in a little knob on top of her head, and strings of it dangled around her face. At the meetings of the Little Light Bearers she spent most of the time telling the boys to sit down and be quiet and in the time that was left she talked to us about how awful it was to be a heathen and how glad we ought to be that we knew about Jesus.

Part of what she said was interesting and part was not. Everybody listened when she told about the heathen cooking the white people and wearing sticks in their noses and other awful things, but when she started saying how



—talked to us about how awful it was to be a heathen

thankful we should be to belong to the Christian race, then they didn't listen very well. Some of them wiggled and whispered, and some of them even got up and walked around. Sometimes Mrs. Pedigo would stop and pray and ask the Lord what to do with the children, and then for a little while they would be quieter.

My brother Joe didn't like to go to the Little Light Bearers very much, so he hardly ever went. But I went most of the time. We always had lemonade and cookies for refreshments. The lemonade was watery, but the cookies were pretty good.

One afternoon we were supposed to bring our missionary boxes to the meeting and open them and see how much money we had saved. Mine had sixteen cents in it, and Joe's had nothing. I had to take them both because he didn't want to go that afternoon.

When the time came to open the boxes Mrs. Pedigo put a basket on the table and we got in a line and walked past it, and poured our money in while Mrs. Pedigo played "Gathering in the Sheaves" on the piano. When all the money was in the basket Mrs. Pedigo came rushing down the steps of the stage and counted it. There were only ninety-two cents. Mrs. Pedigo looked wilder than I had ever seen her look. "Oh, this is terrible," she said. She counted it over again to make sure. "This is awful," she said.

All of the children looked very calm. None of them seemed to be worried. "How are our missions in darkest Africa going to carry on the work if the Little Light Bearers don't do their share?" Mrs. Pedigo asked us. "Think of

those poor little children over there running around without any clothes on, not eating the right kinds of food, and worshipping crude idols. Would you like that if you were in their place?"

"You might not care if you didn't know any better," Tommy Davenport said.

"Yes, but it's our duty to teach them better," Mrs. Pedigo said in an excited voice. "We've got to save them. That's why it makes me feel so terrible to see this ninety-two cents when it ought to be nearer ten dollars."

"We could have a cold drink stand out in front of the church and make some money that way," one of the children said.

But Mrs. Pedigo said no. "I don't think it's right to have things like that in the name of the church," she said. "The Lord wouldn't approve."

Nobody said anything else. I felt sort of sorry for Mrs. Pedigo and the Africans too. Mrs. Pedigo stood there and looked at us and moved her lips a little. Some of the children were whispering and some were wiggling, but Mrs. Pedigo didn't seem to see them.

Finally she told us to bow our heads in prayer while she asked the Lord how to get some more money.

Mrs. Pedigo prayed for about five minutes, and then she said amen, and she told us that a voice had told her to go call up Mrs. Turner, the president of the Woman's Missionary Circle. She went in the office where the telephone was, and while she was gone some of the children got up out of their chairs and ran around on the platform. But when they heard Mrs. Pedigo coming back they got

off in a hurry and sat down. Mrs. Pedigo was smiling very excited and her hair was dangling almost all the way down her back.

"Children, I have a wonderful plan," she said. "Mrs. Turner says the Woman's Missionary Circle will give us half of every dollar we get for a yearly subscription to the Missionary Friend. It's a lovely little paper that some of your mothers take. It tells about the work in the field and if you'll all get out and ask the ladies in your neighborhood, I know we can make up the rest of the money. Let us bow our heads in prayer and ask the Lord's blessing on our undertaking."

This time Mrs. Pedigo prayed a little longer, but after a while she stopped and said the meeting was adjourned, and we would have an hour of refreshments. It didn't take that long, though, because it was only a glass of thin limeade and one vanilla wafer apiece.

After we had finished them Mrs. Pedigo gave a copy of the Missionary Friend to each one of us so we could show it to the people when we asked them to subscribe.

"And while you are getting subscriptions maybe you can spread the word, too," she said, looking wild. "Maybe you can bring the light into some life."

On the way home I looked at the Missionary Friend. It had a lot of pictures of missionaries and some of the heathen they had saved. It showed them playing games and marching in lines into buildings. It didn't look to me like it was worth a dollar, but I wanted to do something to help the Africans.

As soon as I got home I told my mother what the Little Light Bearers were going to do.

"That's fine," she said.

I wanted to start out right then and see how many subscriptions I could get before dark, but she said no, everybody was too busy cooking their suppers and they wouldn't want to be bothered. She said to wait till the next morning when people would have more time to listen.

So the next morning right after breakfast I took the Missionary Friend and started out to get subscriptions. First I asked Joe if he wanted to go.

"No," he said.

"You ought to be ashamed," I told him. "You didn't put any money in your mite box, and now you won't get any subscriptions. How would you like to be over in Africa in the jungle with nothing on you but leaves and no house to live in?"

"I wouldn't care," Joey said. "I think it would be fun."

But he started going along with me. First we went next door to Mrs. Wysinger's house.

I knocked at the door. It took her a long time to come, and when she did she had soot on part of her face and a few clean swipes in the middle where she had washed some of it off. When she saw us she looked sort of mad.

"What do you want, Helen?" she said. "The kitchen stove pipe just fell down and I was cleaning up the mess. I thought you were the insurance man."

"Mrs. Wysinger, do you want to subscribe to this magazine for a dollar?" I asked her, holding it up. "The money

is to help the African missionaries."

"Lord no, honey," she said, beginning to shut the door. "I haven't got time to read what magazines I've already got."

Mrs. Sowder lived in the next house. She was out in her yard digging around the rose bushes. She was a sort of oldish lady with warts on her chin and a loud voice. She was always having fusses with her husband.

"We're getting some subscriptions to a magazine, Mrs. Sowder," I told her. "It costs a dollar. Do you want one? It's to buy clothes and things for the Africans."

"Buy clothes for the Africans!" she said in a loud voice. "I can't even buy clothes for myself." She gave a dirty look at Mr. Sowder's head that was sticking up in the living room window with the paper in front of it.

But she took the Missionary Friend and looked at it a minute. "I couldn't take this anyway," she said, handing it back to me. "This is a Methodist magazine. I'm a Baptist. I wouldn't want to take a Methodist magazine."

She started digging again. I felt sort of discouraged. Joe was walking along slow, writing down the numbers of all the houses we passed. He had learned to write numbers at school and he had a whole notebook full of them. "Joe, we have to hurry," I told him. "Don't take time to write any more numbers down."

"I have to," Joe said.

So we went on down the street and stopped at every house. Some of the people were not at home. The ones that were at home all said no. Some said not today. "It will be too late after today," I told them. "We have to get

the money now so we can send it off. It only costs a dollar."

But that didn't seem to make them want the magazine any more than they had before.

It began to get hot. When we had gone about three blocks on one side of the street I told Joe we would cross over and ask the people on the other side and go back home that way. Then we would get there in time for lunch. The sweat began to run down my back, and Joe kept poking along. I had to wait for him nearly every five minutes. I'm getting sort of tired doing this, I thought. This is too hard.

Old Mr. Welkin was sitting on his porch. He was sort of deaf and there was something wrong with him and he couldn't work. He didn't like people much and he didn't like children at all. I thought I wouldn't ask him to subscribe to the magazine, but then I thought it might hurt his feelings if he saw me going to all the other houses and not going to his.

So I went up to the porch and handed him the magazine.

"Mr. Welkin, do you want to subscribe to this for a year to help the African heathen?" I asked him.

"What?" he said, looking at me as if he didn't like me much.

"It's to help the heathen!" I yelled at him.

Mr. Welkin's face got red and excited looking. "What makes you think they need any help?" he asked.

"Because they don't wear clothes and they worship idols," I yelled. "It's not right to be that way."

"Who says it ain't?" Mr. Welkin said very mad and loud. "Why ain't it?"

"I don't know why," I said. I was a little scared.

"Here, take your book," old Mr. Welkin said, sticking it at me. "I ain't got no use for it." He started muttering to himself, and looking at me while he was muttering.

Joe had stopped writing and was standing there staring at old Mr. Welkin.

I started down the walk pretty fast. Joe stood there and looked at Mr. Welkin a while longer, and then he came too. He kept turning his head around and staring back. "What makes him act like that?" he asked.

"I don't know," I told him. "We better go home now; I guess lunch is ready."

When we got there it was eleven-thirty. "Well, you got back in a hurry, didn't you?" my mother said. "How many subscriptions did you get?"

"Not any," I said. I went to the ice box and drank about a quart of water. "I believe I'll quit," I said when I had finished drinking. "I don't believe I can get any no matter how long I try. I don't believe there's any use wasting any more time."

My father had come home for lunch that day. He was standing there. He didn't seem to have his mind on other things. He heard what I said.

"Quit!" he said. "You mustn't ever say that. When you've started something you must always carry it through. You must keep on until you get at least one subscription. If you don't you won't have any respect for yourself. The worst thing that can happen to anybody is

for them to lose their self-respect."

"I wouldn't lose my self-respect," I told him. "I did the best I could. I wouldn't care."

"You mustn't talk that way," said my father. "Eat a good lunch now and sit down and rest a while, then start right out again determined to succeed. I've been reading a book from the library called 'The Will to Win,'" he said.

"I thought so," said my mother, partly under her breath.

"What?" my father said. "It's got a lot of good sound advice in it. If everybody read it before they were twenty-one, there wouldn't be a person in the United States that wouldn't be a success."

"That would fix everything," my mother said.

"All right, you can laugh if you want to," my father told her.

"I'm not laughing," she said.

We ate lunch. It was green beans and potatoes and cherry pie. It was good, but I kept thinking about having to get the subscription.

After lunch was over I didn't sit down and rest like my father had said. I was afraid if I did I would never get up. I thought I better go on before I thought too much about it.

This time I didn't ask Joe if he wanted to come. He walked too slow. I could get along better without him.

I tried all the houses on the other side of the street that I hadn't tried that morning. Everybody said no. None of them seemed to be interested in helping the Africans. Finally I thought I would try a new place where I didn't

know any of the people.

I went over to Tulip Avenue and followed the street car track for several blocks and finally I came to a place where there were some stores and lunchrooms. I went into one of them. There was a man sitting behind the counter wearing an apron and reading a wild west magazine.

"What'll you have, sister?" he asked me, looking at me as if I wasn't there.

"Do you want to subscribe to this?" I asked him, showing him the Missionary Friend.

"No, sister," he said, and began to read his magazine again.

On the corner there was a large dirty building. "Phoenix House," the sign said. "Apartment Hotel."

Maybe there's somebody in there that would like to subscribe to it, I thought. Maybe they're different from the people that live in this town.

I went in. There was a man at the desk talking to another man and they didn't pay any attention to me so I went on up the steps. There was a long hall. I walked up and down it a while looking at the doors and finally I knocked at one.

"Who is it?" a voice inside said very loud.

I didn't know what to say, so I didn't say anything.

"Is that you, Charlie Crawley?" the voice said. It sounded kind of mad. "If it is, it better not be! Come on in, but it better not be you!"

I opened the door. There was a sort of fat, red-faced woman with fuzzy hair sitting on the edge of the chair.

She had a glass of something in her hand. When she saw it was me she finished drinking it, and then she sat back.

"It's a good thing you wasn't Charlie Crawley," she said to me, slamming the glass down on the table. "If you had of been him you wouldn't be standing there now. I was gonna shoot you full of holes if you had of been him."

I felt sort of funny. I was glad I wasn't Charlie Crawley if that was what she was going to do.

I started to show her the *Missionary Friend*, but then I thought I better wait till she got calmer. She seemed to be sort of excited.

"He treated me like a dog," she said. "He used language to me that no gentleman would use. If he ever comes back here, he'll wish he hadn't. If he comes in this room he'll go out again on a stretcher!"

I stood there a few minutes to see if she was going to say something else, but she just sat there and looked like she was thinking to herself about Charlie Crawley.

Finally I said, "I thought maybe you would like to subscribe to this magazine. That's why I came in here."

"They told me," she said. "They warned me, but I wouldn't listen. They told me how it would be, but no, I thought I knew better."

She started to get up, but she didn't seem to be able to stand up very well, so she sat down again.

"I've had a hard life," she said. "All I've had is trouble. Life is nothing but trouble. That's all it is, trouble."

She looked at me like she was going to cry. I felt funny. I felt like leaving, but my father had told me not to give up, and I had walked all that way.



—sitting on the edge of a chair

"I belong to a missionary society," I told her after I had waited a few minutes. "We're trying to get some money for the Africans."

"I used to go to Sunday School and church too when I was your size," the lady said. "I didn't know what trouble was then. I didn't know anything about trouble till I met that snake Charlie Crawley."

"It tells about the missionaries and what they do," I explained to her. But she didn't seem to hear me. She seemed to be thinking of something else.

"If she can get him, let her have him," she said.

I was beginning to feel discouraged. "We need ten dollars," I told her. "That's what Mrs. Pedigo thinks we ought to have."

"If he thinks I want his dirty money he's mistaken," said the lady suddenly in a loud mad voice. "It's over there on the floor where I threw it. They can sweep it out with the trash. I don't need it. I can take care of myself. I threw his dirty money on the floor, and it can stay there for all I care."

I looked over in the corner, and sure enough there were some dollar bills folded up. Then all of a sudden I thought of something.

"Do you mean you don't want the money?" I asked. "Because Mrs. Pedigo would like to have it if you really don't. She's anxious to get some for the African missionaries. I could give it to her if you're really just going to throw it away."

"She can have it," the lady said. "Anybody can have it that will pick it up. I wouldn't dirty my hands on it."

I went over there and got it. It was about six dollars. It would buy the heathen a lot of clothes and things.

I started to tie it up in my handkerchief. "Mrs. Pedigo will be glad," I said. "We only had ninety-two cents. That's why we had to try to get some more."

The lady was looking at the money in my hand. "Wait a minute, honey," she said. "Bring it over here a minute."

I took it over to her. She picked it up by the corners and counted it several times. While she was counting she had a disgusted expression on her face.

She kept saying things to herself in a disgusted voice. She sat there and looked at the money for a while.

"I guess I might as well keep part of it," she said finally. "I've got some bills to pay. I'm honest. I believe in being honest. I better keep enough to pay my bills."

She took out a dollar and handed it to me. She folded the rest and went over to the dresser and put it under the cover. When she walked she went from side to side.

"I'd like to see him try to get it," she said, beginning to look mad again. "If he comes back after it, he'll wish he hadn't."

"Do you want the Missionary Friend to be sent here?" I asked her. "You are supposed to get a year of it for this dollar."

"I worked my fingers to the bone," she said. "I wore myself to a frazzle, and what thanks did I get!"

I guess she doesn't want a magazine, I thought. I thought I better go, because she was looking at the dollar in my hand like she was sorry she had given it to me, and I was afraid she might ask for it back.

"Well, goodbye," I told her.

As I closed the door I could still hear her talking.

On the way home I kept thinking how glad Mrs. Pedigo would have been if I could have taken her the six dollars. Nobody else in the whole missionary society would be likely to get that much.

But still, even one dollar was better than nothing at all.

B A D W O R D

SOME MEN WERE WORKING on the water pipe in front of our house because it had bursted and squirted water all over the street. For a long time Joe and I stood and watched them until finally my mother called me in the house to do some work, and Joe got to stay and watch them by himself. I was supposed to be making up the beds upstairs, but part of the time I looked out the window and watched the men shoveling dirt. When they had got it all shoveled back in the ditch and were about to put their tools in the truck all of a sudden the water squirted up and they had to dig a hole and fix the pipe all over again.

I tried to hurry up so I could go back out there before they got through, but my mother told me something else to do and by that time the men had gone.

It's not fair, I thought to myself. Joe never does have to do any work and I always do. It's not fair to be a girl.

I went around to the back yard and Joe was digging a hole out there with my father's shovel. He was putting his foot on it and pushing it down and throwing the dirt out like the men had.

I sat down on the sidewalk and watched him.

"What are you digging for, Joe?" I asked him after a while.

"Because I want to," Joe said.

He straightened up and spit and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand. Then he started digging again.

I watched him a while longer and finally I said, "Now let me dig a while, Joe."

"No," he said, "I have to."

"Well, you could let me dig for just a minute," I told him. "Then I would give you the shovel back."

"No," he said.

"All right," I told him. "You'll see!"

So Joe kept on digging and I kept on sitting there. Joe kept whispering something under his breath, and all of a sudden he stopped digging and leaned on his shovel and said partly to himself, "Good God!"

"What?" I said. I thought I must not have heard him right. "What did you say, Joe?"

"Good God!" Joe said again. He said it twice. "Good God!" he said.

"Now you've done it, Joe," I told him. "Now you've said something awful."

Joe looked at me a minute and his face looked a little anxious. He started digging some more, but every once in a while he would turn his head and look around at me.

"You ought not to said that, Joe," I told him. "Now you'll get into trouble."

Joe looked even more anxious, but he said, "How will I?"

"When mother finds out what you said," I told him. "When she washes out your mouth with yellow soap that's how. Then I guess you'll be sorry you said such an awful thing."

Joe looked around to see if anybody had been listening. "She's in the house," he said. "She couldn't hear me."

"No, but I could," I told him.

Joe's face looked more anxious than ever. I guess he was thinking about the other time he got his mouth washed out and how awful it had tasted.

"I don't guess I'll stay here if you won't let me dig," I said. I got up from the sidewalk and started toward the house.

"You can dig," Joe called after me all of a sudden. "I don't care if you dig."

"All right then," I said. I took the spade and dug some, but it was hard to do and it wasn't much fun after all. Joe stood there and watched me a while. He looked pretty anxious.

"I tell you what this can be, Joey," I said after I had dug a little. "We can fill it up with water and make a lake out of it."

"No," Joe started to say, then all of a sudden I guess he remembered.

"All right," he said.

So we carried the water from the front yard faucet and we filled up the hole and put some sticks in it for fish. Every few minutes Joe would start to say he wasn't going to do it, and every time he would remember and do what

I told him to. I had never seen him mind anybody like that before. It seemed very queer. I could hardly believe it.

That night after supper when the time came to clear up the dishes my mother said like she always did, "Joey, why don't you help Helen, then she can get through that much quicker."

"I don't want to," Joe said. He got another cookie and started into the living room with it.

"You better, Joe," I told him.

"No," Joe said, but all of a sudden he changed his mind. He put down the cookie and started taking the glasses into the kitchen.

My mother looked sort of surprised when she saw what he was doing.

"That's a good boy," she said. She started splashing the glasses under the faucet. "Look how nice Joey's being tonight, Helen."

"Yes," I said. "And he's going to help dry them too."

Joe gave me a sort of mad look and for a minute I thought he was going to be stubborn, but he got a towel and started drying the glasses.

My mother stopped washing the dishes and stared at him for a minute.

"My goodness," she said, partly under her breath.

In just a little while all the dishes were finished and put away.

"You see," my mother told us when she was fixing to turn out the light. "We got through in half the time.

That's the way it is when everybody helps."

"I know it," I said. "See, Joe, that's the way you ought to do all the time."

But Joe didn't say anything. He was going out of the kitchen, and he was looking back at me over his shoulder. His face looked sort of mad and surprised at the same time. I guess he was surprised that he had done some work without wanting to.

When he was gone my mother kept standing there with her hand on the light switch. She looked a little worried.

"I wonder what's got into Joey?" she said.

"Maybe he got tired of playing all the time," I told her. "Maybe he decided to work some for a change."

"It certainly is funny," she said. "I never saw him act like that before. I hope he's not coming down with something."

"Maybe he's going to mind better after this and do more what people tell him to," I said.

"It makes me sort of nervous," my mother said. "It's not natural." But then she seemed to cheer up. "Oh well, whatever it is, I guess he'll be over it tomorrow."

But it turned out that my mother was wrong because the next day Joe worked harder than he had over the dishes. He helped me make up the beds and set the table, and he carried part of the things back from the grocery store. He kept looking madder and madder all the time and every once in a while when I told him what to do he would open his mouth to say no and then he would think and close it again. All day long he did whatever I wanted to do. I never had got him to mind that way before.

When my mother saw how Joe was doing she began to look worried again. "Do you feel bad, Joe?" she asked him two or three times.

"No," he said.

"Are you sure you don't hurt anywhere?"

"No," he said again.

"I can't understand it," my mother said.

That night when my father came home from work he had a pasteboard box with a lot of different kinds of little plants in it. He took the box around to the back yard and set it on the steps.

"What are you going to do, papa?" I asked him. "Are you going to make a garden?"

"No," he said. "I got these to fix some porch boxes with. I'm going to make one for each end of the front porch tonight, and tomorrow I want you to dig me a lot of good rich black dirt from the empty lot on the other side of the alley and bring it around to the front and fill up the boxes. You can haul it around in the coaster wagon, and I'll give you two cents a load."

"Joe can help me, can't you, Joe?" I asked. Joe was standing there.

An awful frown began to come on his face. "No," he said. "I'm not going to."

"You better help me, Joey," I told him.

"No," he said, but it sounded as if he might change his mind.

"Joe can dig the dirt and I can pull the wagon," I said to my father. "Joe, don't forget."

"All right," Joe said after a minute. He said it very loud and mad.

My father was taking the plants out of the box and he almost dropped them.

"What?" he said. He looked at me, and he looked at Joe. I guess he thought he had heard it wrong. Finally he said, "That will be fine. Only the best way would be to take turns. One dig a while and one haul a while. That would be the only fair way."

"I think so too," I said. Joe didn't say anything. His eyes were glaring at me very mad. It made me feel sort of nervous.

I don't care, I thought. It won't hurt him to do a little work, and besides I'm not going to really tell.

"Anyway, Joe, we can make some money," I told him. But he kept looking at me like that, and I kept on feeling sort of funny. Maybe after tomorrow I'll let him be lazy again, I thought. After we get the dirt dug, then I don't care how he does.

The next morning right after breakfast I got the coaster wagon and the shovel, and we went out in the vacant lot to get the dirt. Joe came along behind me kicking his feet and when we got across the alley he just stood there doing nothing but frowning.

"Joe, do you want to dig first?" I asked him.

"No," he said.

"Well, do you want to haul first then?"

"No," he said. "I don't want to do anything."

"You have to, so you might as well stop frowning up

your face like that," I said. "Then when we get our money we can go to the store and spend it. That will be fun, won't it?"

Joe didn't say anything. "All right, you can dig a while," I told him. I stood there and waited and finally Joey took the shovel and began to dig very slow. Every few minutes he would look at me and stick out his lip a little farther, but finally there was enough dirt in the wagon for me to haul it around to the front and put it in one of the porch boxes. When I got back Joe was sitting on the ground and no more dirt was dug.

"Joe, you better get up from there and behave yourself," I said. "We never are going to get through if you act like that."

"I don't care," he said.

"Get up and get to work now, Joe," I said. "Don't do that way."

Joe got up but he moved very slow. He would put a shovelful in, and then he would stop and rest for about five minutes. It looked like we never would get finished. Finally I got tired of standing there waiting so much and I told him I would dig a while. But that didn't make it any better. I would fill the wagon up in a hurry, and then Joe would take it around to the front yard and he would be gone so long I would think he was never coming back.

I'm getting sort of tired of this, I thought.

Just then Joe came back around the house. He was walking so slow you could hardly tell he was moving. My mother came out of the kitchen to bring something out to throw in the garbage can. When Joe got to where

he could hear I asked her, "Mother, if Joey said a bad word would you want somebody to tell you about it?"

"Of course I would," my mother said, throwing the garbage in. She was looking around in the alley for something. "I wonder what happened to the garbage can lid," she said. "Have either one of you seen it?"

"You wouldn't want Joe to be saying bad words without you knowing it, would you?" I asked her.

"No," she said. "What did he say?"

I opened my mouth to tell her and just then Joe started coming across the yard a lot faster and his face was looking pretty anxious. I felt sort of sorry for him.

"I just meant if he ever did say one," I told my mother.

My mother found the garbage can lid and put it on the can. She went back down the walk. Joe was digging pretty fast with the shovel. Now maybe we can get finished, I thought.

By the time lunch came we had carried ten loads of dirt and the boxes were almost full. My legs were aching, and so was my back. Joe's face was red and his hair was wet and streaks of dirt were all over him. I guess he had worked the hardest he ever had in his life. Every time he lifted a shovelful of dirt and put it in the wagon he would give a loud grunt.

"Anyway we will have a dime to spend after lunch," I kept telling him but that didn't seem to make him feel any better. It was a good thing we were almost finished because Joe was beginning to look pretty mad again, and it looked to me like he might start sitting down again almost any time.

When my father came home to lunch he went around to look at the porch boxes to see how much we had done.

He seemed to be very pleased. "That's fine," he said. "You must have worked pretty hard."

"Yes, we did," I told him. "We carried ten loads."

"That's good," he said. "Each box ought to have about three more loads apiece so it can be packed down a little, and while you're about it you can bring enough for two more boxes and dump it here under the window. I might as well make some window boxes while I'm about it. There are plenty of plants and lumber."

I looked at Joe and his lip was sticking out pretty far and he had the worst look on his face he had had that day.

"Couldn't we do it tomorrow?" I asked.

"No," my father said in a cheerful voice. "Finish it up while you're about it, and then I can plant the things when I come home this afternoon before they have a chance to wilt."

All through lunch I kept looking over at Joe to see how he was looking. He was looking very stubborn.

"Maybe Joe won't help me," I told my father when he was going out the door on his way back to work.

"Yes he will," my father said. "He helped you this morning, didn't he?"

"Yes, but he's getting tired of working so much," I said.

"Well, use a little psychology on him," my father said.

"I don't know how," I told him.

"Keep reminding him of the money he's going to get when you're through."

My father had to run then to catch the street car, and I went back into the house. Joe was still sitting at the table.

"Come on, Joe," I said. At first he sat still, but finally he got up and started moving very slow.

My mother was in the kitchen looking in some cook books.

"I have to make an angel food cake for the church ice cream supper," she said. "And I don't want either one of you to come inside unless I call you. I don't want to be interrupted for anything unless it's really important."

I looked to see if Joe was listening, but he had already gone outside. "What if Joe won't help me dig this afternoon?" I asked her.

"I guess he'll help you. He's been so good lately you can get him to help you if you go about it the right way." She kept on reading the cook book and I went out to the vacant lot. Joe was sitting in the dirt frowning and digging his feet in the ground.

I tried to use some psychology on him like my father had said.

"Come on, Joe," I said. "Let's hurry up so we can get our money and spend it."

But Joe kept on sitting there and no matter how much psychology I used on him he wouldn't get up and get to work.

"All right, Joe," I said after a while. "I'm going to wait

a few minutes longer and then if you don't get up I'm really going to tell."

So I waited till I had counted fifty, then I waited a little longer.

"Are you going to help me, Joe?" I asked him.

"No," he said.

"All right then, I'm going," I said.

I started toward the house, then I came back again.

"Joe, I'll give you one more chance. If you get up right this minute I won't go."

Joe kept sitting there.

This time I counted to three hundred by fives, and I counted as slow as I could to give him plenty of time. When I had finished Joe still hadn't got up.

"Joe, I gave you plenty of chances and you wouldn't do like you're supposed to," I said. "And this time I'm really going."

All of a sudden Joe's face got an awful look on it and he opened his mouth and yelled, "Go on and tell. I don't care."

"All right, I will then," I said. I hurried to the house as fast as I could go before I changed my mind.

"Mother," I yelled as soon as I got inside the door. "Joe said a bad word!"

My mother was measuring some things in the sifter. She gave a jump and dropped the spoon and her elbow knocked a cup of milk off the table and it fell on the floor and broke and splashed the milk all over everything.

My mother stood there and looked at me. "Now look

what you made me do," she said. "I thought I told you to stay outside till I called you."

"Yes, but you said this morning you wanted to know if Joe said a bad word," I told her. "And he said one. He said it day before yesterday when we were playing in the back yard."

But my mother didn't pay any attention to what I was saying.

"I ought to blister you good," she said, looking mad at me. "Coming in here like that scaring me out of my wits. Now I've forgotten how much baking powder I had put in and I'll have to start all over. And that was the last cup of milk in the house so you can just march yourself down to the grocery store and get a bottle."

I felt very funny. "Don't you want to know what he said?" I asked her.

My mother was getting the mop to wipe up the spilled milk.

"Get out of here quick, Helen, before I lose my temper," she said.

I took an empty bottle and I went out the front way to the grocery store. Joe was sitting under the bush looking at an old funny paper. I could tell just by looking at him that now he was going to be lazy again, exactly like he had been before.

A FRIEND TO ANIMALS

MY GREAT AUNT BERTHA

was my mother's aunt. She lived in Nashville. We had never seen her, but every Christmas she sent us something. She always gave Joe a box of handkerchiefs, and she always gave me a book. One was called "Good Manners for Little Folks." Another one was "A Noble Life" and it told about a boy that started chewing tobacco and drinking whiskey before he was ten years old, and playing cards and getting into bad company and leading an awful life until he went to a revival meeting, then he turned into a preacher. The book I liked best was called "The Weed" and it told all the things cigarettes would do to your lungs.

My great aunt Bertha wrote to my mother every once in a while, and one morning the postman brought a letter from her, and my mother sat down to read it.

All of a sudden she looked sort of surprised and shocked too.

"What does it say?" I asked her. I was standing there.

"Your great aunt Bertha is coming to visit us," my mother said. "She says she is going to stay here three

weeks while your Cousin Clem and his wife are in South Carolina."

"Don't you want her to come?" I asked.

"Why yes, of course," my mother said quickly. "Only I don't know where I can put her."

"She could have my bed," I said.

"We could fix a cot for you in the upstairs hall," my mother said. "I guess that's what we'd better do."

I hurried out to find Joe and tell him that Aunt Bertha was coming. Joe was playing under the sweet-gum tree.

When I told him he didn't say anything at first. Then he said, "Maybe she will bring us something."

"You ought to be ashamed," I told him. "You're not supposed to be thinking of what people will give you when they come."

"Why?" Joe asked.

"It's not polite," I told him. "You're supposed to be thinking how glad you are to see them."

"I don't know whether I'm glad to see her or not," Joe said.

I saw it was no use to tell him how to act. He was too stubborn. So I went on away from him. I was wondering what our Aunt Bertha would be like.

Every day after that I would ask my mother about Aunt Bertha, but my mother was too busy to talk very much. She was cleaning up the house and cooking, getting ready for Aunt Bertha. Finally Thursday came, and my mother told us to take a bath and put on our clean clothes, and we would go to the station to meet her.

I was supposed to help Joe get ready but he twisted

and wiggled so I could hardly button him up.

"Stand still, Joe," I told him. "Don't you want to look nice when you see Aunt Bertha?"

"I don't care," Joey said. He kept wiggling and squirming and pulling at his pants. "They're too itchy," he said.

Finally we were ready and we went down to the station on the street car. The train was just coming in when we got there, and it seemed very exciting. "Where's Aunt Bertha?" I kept asking my mother.

In a minute they put a wooden step under the train door and the passengers began to get off. A tall fat woman climbed down on the step. She was carrying two bags. Some porters ran up and started to take the bags, but she shook her head no and jerked the bags away from them, then she began craning her neck, looking all around the station.

"That's your Aunt Bertha," my mother said. And just then she saw us, and she started rushing down the platform toward us. My mother started hurrying toward her, and Aunt Bertha put the bags down and kissed my mother, and then she kissed me, and she tried to kiss Joe, but he moved his face away and kept scratching his legs and staring at her.

"I thought I'd never get here," Aunt Bertha said. She talked very loud. "The train is eleven minutes late. Well, you look just the same, Louise, and the children, my my. Helen looks a little like you, but who does Joe favor? There's something about his jaw that puts me in mind of somebody, but I don't know who."

"Excuse me a minute, and I'll run get a taxi," my

mother said. "I'll get somebody to carry your bags."

"No, I don't want those dirty porters to carry my things," Aunt Bertha said. "Helen can carry one and I can carry the other. They're not heavy."

While my mother was gone to get the taxi I tried to be polite to Aunt Bertha, and I asked her did she like to ride on trains, and she said no they were too dirty and they served liquor in the dining car, and the people blew smoke all over her. She kept looking at Joe and finally she said, "He looks more like a Marsden than a Hempfield."

I tried to think of something to say, and finally I said, "Those pants he's got on are scratchy. He wiggled so much I couldn't hardly button him up behind."

"Tsk, tsk," Aunt Bertha said, looking at Joe. "You ought to stand still like a little man when your sister tries to help you. When my boy Clem was your age he had to wear woolen underwear winter and summer because of his health, and he stood it like a little soldier. He grew up to be a fine man."

Joe stared at her. He didn't look like he liked her very much. I was afraid he was going to say something impolite, but just then my mother came back in the taxi. The taxi driver was smoking a cigar and the smoke kept coming back in our faces.

"Ugh," Aunt Bertha said, holding her nose. "I can't bear the smell of that filthy stuff. Louise," she said to my mother, "Clem is a fine man. He never has smoked or drank. He can't bear the smell of it. I can honestly say that I've raised a fine man."



—looking all around

"That's good," my mother said.

Aunt Bertha went on talking. "I tell him it's a pity he didn't have some boys he would make such a wonderful father." She looked at Joe while she was talking. "I remember when Clem was about Joe's age he was such a friendly little chap. He didn't know a stranger. We called him Little Sunshine. He was such an affectionate little fellow."

"Sure enough?" said my mother, being polite.

Joe turned his head and looked at Aunt Bertha once, then he looked back out of the window.

Just then we were home.

All the way into the house Aunt Bertha kept talking. I was going to tell her what grade I was in at school, and some more things, but I didn't have a chance. When she had put her clothes away she went out to sit on the porch and I went out there too to be polite to her while my mother was doing some things in the house. Aunt Bertha talked about when her boy Clem was a little boy.

Just then Joe came out wearing his coveralls and eating a piece of bread and butter. He stood at the end of the porch and stared at Aunt Bertha while he was chewing.

"Come over here and talk to me, Joe boy," Aunt Bertha said. "Come over here, and let's see if the old cat's got your tongue."

"He won't talk to people much till he knows if he likes them or not," I told her.

"Oh, all the little boys like me," Aunt Bertha said. "Why at home in Nashville I teach a class of little boys

in Sunday School. I know all about little boys, and we have the nicest times. And I have a boy of my own that used to be just your age. I remember what a tender-hearted little chap he was. Once we had an old dog named Towser and when we had to shoot him Clem cried as if his little heart would break. He never would hurt even a fly. It would break his little heart to step on an ant."

"I don't step on ants either if I can help it," I said.

All of a sudden Joe said, "I do." He had been staring at Aunt Bertha while she told about Cousin Clem, and sticking out his lip. "I shook some stuff out of a box and killed a lot of them," he said.

"He's just showing off," I told Aunt Bertha. "That was just some that got in the pantry and got in the food. They weren't wild ants."

"I killed them," Joe said. "I killed every one I could see."

"He's just showing off," I told her again. "He doesn't really kill them."

But Aunt Bertha looked very shocked. "I'm surprised at you, Joe," she said. "When Clem was your age he never would have done a thing like that, much less boasted of it. Mamma, he used to say, God made the ants just like he made us. We're all God's creatures."

Joe looked at her with his mouth open. Finally he went down the steps and around the house. He kept staring over his shoulder as he went.

My mother came out of the house and sat down in a chair. Aunt Bertha told her what Joe had said. "That

child needs something to love," she told my mother. "That's what's the matter with him. I heard a speaker at a P.T.A. meeting on that subject not so long ago. Now a rabbit makes a nice pet for a child and I'm going to buy these children one while I'm here. It will give Joe an outlet for his affections and make him kind and gentle and more thoughtful of others. I always saw that Clem had something to lavish his little affections on when he was a child, and you couldn't find a sweeter-natured man than he turned out to be."

Then she began to tell some more about Cousin Clem when he was a little boy and how she made him promise not to smoke a cigarette or drink any beer all his life, and how she trained him to be courteous and kind to everybody, especially women. Then she started telling about a club she belonged to in Nashville that was supposed to keep people from smoking or drinking, and another one that was supposed to make them be kind to animals. She was telling about a letter she wrote to the paper about bull fights and how awful they were. For a while I stayed there, but finally I got tired of listening, and I went around to hunt for Joe and tell him about the rabbit we were going to get.

So in a few days Aunt Bertha did like she said, only she got us two rabbits instead of one, and we put them in an orange crate in the back yard. One was white all over and one had black spots. Joe and I named them Whitey and Blacky, but when Aunt Bertha heard it, she said they ought to have names more suitable for rabbits,

so she called them Uncle Wiggly and Molly Cottontail.

Every day Aunt Bertha would come out and show us how to feed the rabbits. She would talk to them while she was feeding them, and she would call them bunnies. "Is it good, bunnies?" she would ask them.

When she said that Joe always stopped watching the rabbits and stared at Aunt Bertha.

One morning before he went to work our father made us a new swing on a limb of the sweet-gum tree in the front yard, and that afternoon I was pushing Joe when Aunt Bertha called us to come help her feed the rabbits. I told Joe to come on, but he wouldn't.

"I'm going," I told him. "We're supposed to be polite to Aunt Bertha, and besides, she gave us the rabbits."

Joe didn't say anything. He started twisting himself up and whirling around in the swing.

I went around to the back. "Where's Joe?" asked Aunt Bertha.

"He's swinging," I told her. "He won't come."

"Yes he will," Aunt Bertha said. "You go around there and tell Joe the poor bunnies are hungry, and they're out here waiting for him to come feed them."

So I went around and told Joe. "Joe, why don't you come on and help feed the rabbits like Aunt Bertha said?" I asked him.

"She talks too much," he said.

"Yes, but you're supposed to be polite and do what people say when they come to visit you."

"I'm not going to," he said.

I was trying to think of something to say next to Joe

to make him have good manners when some boys from down the street came along the sidewalk. They were sort of limping and they sat down on our walk and began to take off their shoes. They were about twelve years old.

Joe got out of the swing and stood on our grass and stared at them. They took some dried weeds it looked like out of their pockets and one of them tore a piece of paper into little squares. They began rolling the dried weeds into the paper.

"What is that?" Joe asked them after a while.

"Rabbit tobacco," one of them said.

"What do you do with it?" he asked them.

"What do you think?" one of them said. But a red-haired one handed Joe a bunch. "Here, you can have some," he said. "You smoke it."

Joe took the rabbit tobacco and started putting it in his pocket.

"Joe, you better throw that down," I told him.

But he kept on putting it in his pocket a little at a time.

"You ought not to smoke," I told him. "It's bad for your health. It makes holes in your lungs."

The boys began to laugh. "It makes holes in your lungs! Ha, ha, ha," they yelled.

"It does too," I told them. "You ought not to give it to him. He's not supposed to smoke or play with matches, and besides he's just six years old."

They kept on laughing as they started off. "Joe, that'll make holes in your lungs," they yelled all the way down the street.

"You ought to be ashamed," I said, after they were gone.

I swung in the swing for a while and watched Joe. He had a piece of paper and he was rolling up a cigarette. He kept trying to make it stay together, and finally he licked it and stuck it in his mouth. He got up from the grass and started in the house.

"You better not get a match," I yelled at him. "You'll get into trouble."

But he kept on going. "All right," I thought. "I told him not to. I can't help it if he doesn't mind."

In a minute Joe came back out and he had lit the cigarette and was blowing out smoke. The smoke trailed behind him as he came.

He sat down on the sidewalk and kept puffing on the cigarette and blowing out smoke.

"Look," he said every time he blew out a mouthful.

I was just getting ready to go back to the rabbit pen and tell Aunt Bertha that Joe still wouldn't come, when all of a sudden Aunt Bertha herself came around the corner of the house. When she saw what Joey was doing she gave a loud scream.

"See, I told you, Joe, I told you you'd get in trouble," I said, but I guess he couldn't hear me, because Aunt Bertha was coming down the walk, talking as she came.

She snatched the cigarette out of Joe's mouth and threw it over in the grass. "You bad bad little boy," she said. "I'm surprised! You bad bad boy you!"

"It was just rabbit tobacco," I told her. "It wasn't real."

"Yes, but it's the principle of the thing," Aunt Bertha said. "Smoking a nasty, filthy cigarette. A little boy like you. Why, when my boy was your age he would rather died than done a thing like that. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

Joey kept staring at her, and his lip began to stick out. When he did that way he looked awful.

When Aunt Bertha saw how Joe was looking at her she began to act a little nervous. But she kept on talking. "Just wait till I tell your mamma," she said. "How will your mamma feel when she finds out how her little boy has been doing?" In a minute she went in the house and slammed the door.

"Now she's gone in to tell on you, Joe," I said.

Joe kept looking mad toward the door where she had gone in.

"I hope something will happen to her," he said after a while.

"You ought not to say that about her, Joe, she's your great aunt," I told him.

"I don't want her to be," he said.

"You can't help it."

He didn't say anything out loud, but he kept kicking the sidewalk and muttering things to himself. They were things about Aunt Bertha.

But after all, the only thing that happened about Joey smoking the rabbit tobacco was that mother told him never to do it again because he might catch on fire. So it didn't matter so much about Aunt Bertha telling on him,

only it made Joe not like her more than ever, and every time he saw her he would give her a mad look.

And the next day was when the rabbits started getting out. When we went out to feed them that afternoon they were gone. Aunt Bertha got very excited. "We must find them quick before they get too far," she said. She began to look all around the yard and she told me to go across the alley and look in the vacant lot in the weeds.

Joe went with me. "Maybe a cat ate them up," he said. But after a while I heard something rustling, and when I looked it was the rabbits, down in the weeds nibbling on something they had found. We took them back and put them in their box.

"Poor little things," Aunt Bertha said. She looked at Joe. "I guess they thought nobody loved them," she said. "They were looking for a new home."

She started giving them a carrot. "When your cousin Clem was a little boy he had an old dog named Towser, and when we had to shoot it he cried like his little heart would break. He was such a tender-hearted little fellow. He always fed *his* pets."

Joe looked at Aunt Bertha a minute, and then he went around to the front yard.

"I never saw such a child," Aunt Bertha said to me. "I just don't seem to know how to appeal to him. He just don't seem to have any feelings at all."

I tried to think of something to say, but I couldn't, so I just stood there and looked polite and watched Aunt Bertha finish feeding the rabbits and listened to her talk about Joe. "He is certainly a queer child," she said. "It

must come from his father's side. One thing sure, he's not a Hempfield."

Almost every day after that the rabbits slipped out of their box and hopped away. And then we would have to hunt for three or four hours in the weeds before we found them. My mother made Joe help me because she said the rabbits were half his. But all while he was looking he would turn his face toward where Aunt Bertha was standing watching us, and he would whisper things to himself that he wished would happen to her.

Aunt Bertha couldn't get in the weeds because of her health. She would stand at the edge of the alley and tell us where to look. And when we had found the rabbits and put them back in their box Aunt Bertha would look at Joe and say, "Children that don't love their pets ought not to have any."

But no matter how much Joe and I put wire or boards around the bottom of the box the rabbits would keep getting out. Aunt Bertha would stick a carrot through the lats, and they would bend over and nibble at it, and look good and happy. And the next time we looked in the box they would be gone, and we would have to look for them all over again.

Once when we had caught them after about three hours of looking and Aunt Bertha had fed them and given them some water and gone in the house, I was standing there looking at the rabbits. "I am sick and tired of them hopping away like they do," I told Joe. "I am tired of looking for them every day."

"We could tie their back legs together," said Joe.

"Then they couldn't get out."

"I don't believe Aunt Bertha would want us to do that," I said. "She might think that was being unkind to them."

"I don't care," Joe said. He went in the house and got some string and I held the rabbits while he tied them.

"Don't tie them too tight," I told him, "because we don't want to be unkind to them."

When we had finished they could still hop a little bit, but not much. They didn't seem to care because they were tied. They kept on nibbling and looking out of the cracks between the slats.

So all afternoon we didn't have to chase the rabbits, and before supper it was barely beginning to get dark and we were in the back yard catching some lightning bugs. Joey had a bottle with twenty-nine in it, and I was helping him. In the bottle the bugs would light up and it was like a little lantern. I was putting two more in when Aunt Bertha came out to call us to supper.

She had some cabbage for the rabbits, too, and she was going down the walk to give it to them.

"Look, Aunt Bertha," I told her. "We're catching lightning bugs. We've got thirty-one already, and we just started a few minutes ago."

Aunt Bertha gave a little scream, and she dropped the cabbage and ran over and snatched the bottle out of Joe's hand.

She turned the bottle upside down and let the lightning bugs out. All the time she was talking as fast as she could. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself!" she said. "Tor-

turing innocent little insects like that. Haven't you got any feelings at all?"

"I didn't think they would care," I said. "I didn't think it would hurt anything, if we let them go after a while."

"Shame on you both!" Aunt Bertha said. "How would you like to be shut up in a bottle?"

I couldn't see how Joe's face was looking, because he had his back partly turned, but I could tell from the way he was kicking the sidewalk that his lip was sticking out. I could tell he was thinking of awful things.

Aunt Bertha let all the lightning bugs out, then she picked up her cabbage and went over to the box to feed the rabbits. She was still talking. "I'm ashamed of you both," she was saying, and then she saw the rabbits with their back feet tied, and she threw the cabbage down again and she began talking louder than ever. "Did they tie you up, poor little bunnies?" she asked the rabbits. "Did the bad, bad children tie you up?"

She raised up the box and reached inside to untie their feet. As soon as she did it, Uncle Wiggly, the white one, hopped out and Aunt Bertha just barely caught him before he got to the alley. When Aunt Bertha put the box down she was breathing hard from catching him. She got the cabbage and started dropping pieces of it through the slats.

"I don't blame you for wanting to run away," she said. "No wonder you want to run off from such bad children."

"We didn't mean to hurt them," I told her. "We just wanted to fix them so they wouldn't hop off into the weeds so much."

But Aunt Bertha didn't say anything to me. When she had finished dropping in all the cabbage she went on past us into the house. She looked like she was going to tell.

"We better go on in to supper," I told Joe. I hurried on in to hear what she was going to say. But she had already told our mother on us and all I heard was her saying, "Of all the barefaced cruelty. A child that will mistreat an animal is liable to do anything."

"I must speak to them," my mother said.

I went in and sat down at the table. I could hear my father hammering on something in the basement. I was glad he wasn't there to hear because it might make him feel bad if he knew what we had done.

"I want you and Joe to come out to the kitchen a minute, Helen," my mother told me. I went out and got Joe. When we went past Aunt Bertha he gave her a mad look. She was sitting up straight in her chair eating some soup. She was on a liquid diet because of her health.

My mother closed the kitchen door. "What are you going to do, are you going to whip us?" I asked her.

"No," she said. "But you mustn't bother your Aunt Bertha again. She's an old lady, and she's visiting us, and it's not nice to do anything that will make her feel bad."

"All right, we won't then, will we, Joe?" I said. But Joe didn't say anything. He had an awful look on his face.

My mother was taking something out of the oven. "Now you can go on in and eat your supper," she said.

We went in and sat down, and my father had come up from the basement and he was sitting there thinking while Aunt Bertha talked to him about herself.

"I've always been that way," she was saying. "I've always had a delicate digestion. Clem is just like me in that. We get it from the Hempfield side of the family. All the Hempfields are frail, and they were all sensitive, high-strung people. The two seem to go together. The Hempfields were all tender-hearted, sensitive people."

"Is that so?" my father said, but he looked very dreamy. "A large piece of beaver board, that's what I need," he said.

"For instance, when I read a book I always suffer right along with the characters," Aunt Bertha said. "I remember when Clem was a little fellow and I read him the story of *Black Beauty* how the tears rolled down his little face. We just sat there and cried together. He was so sensitive and tender-hearted, he wouldn't hurt a flea."

She looked at Joe when she said it. Then she took a pork chop off the dish and put it in her plate and poured some gravy over it. "Just a teensy piece of meat won't hurt me," she said.

Joe had started eating his supper, but now he put down his fork and stared at Aunt Bertha. I could tell by the way he looked that he was going to say something and that it wouldn't be polite.

"You said you couldn't eat any meat," he said.

Aunt Bertha's mouth dropped open; she looked surprised; her face got red.

"I'm not used to having little boys tell me what to eat," she said.

"Joe, eat your supper," my mother told him. "And tend to your own business."

"She said she couldn't eat anything but soup," he said.

Aunt Bertha's face got redder than ever. "Are you going to put up with that?" she asked my mother. "Are you going to let that child sit there and tell me what to eat?"

Joe's lip started sticking out, and his eyes glared.

"Joe, please leave the table," my mother told him. Joe got down and went into the living room. All the way he kept looking back over his shoulder at Aunt Bertha.

When he was gone Aunt Bertha started eating her pork chop again. She looked a little calmer. "You ought to do something with that boy," she said. "You ought to pin down on him. At first I thought he could be appealed to, but he can't. He's got the worst attitude of any child I ever saw in all my days, and I used to be a school teacher, and I've got a boy of my own, so I know. You ought to pin down on him before it's too late."

"He'll outgrow it," my mother said. She looked a little worried. "Anyway, I hope he will."

All of a sudden I thought of something to say. "He acts bad in Sunday School sometimes," I said.

My father was buttering a piece of bread and he was frowning and thinking at the same time. "Whatever happened to that big piece of beaver board that was left over from the attic?" he said. "There was a big piece left over, whatever happened to it, anyway?"

"Sometimes he talks back to people, too," I told Aunt Bertha.

"Twenty-four by thirty-six would be about right," my father said.

"You watch out after your own self, Helen," my mother told me.

Just then I saw Joe's head sticking around from behind the dining room door. His face was looking very mad, and he was whispering things to himself.

After supper and the dishes were washed Aunt Bertha and my mother were rocking on the porch and I was sitting on the steps partly listening to Aunt Bertha talk. Joe was sitting on the grass looking at the sky. It was lightning around the edges, and it looked like a storm was coming.

All over the yard the lightning bugs were turning themselves off and on. We could have had a lot by now if Aunt Bertha hadn't made us stop.

All of a sudden I thought: I don't much like Aunt Bertha. She told on us, and she talked about Joe, and she always sees what we do. I don't much like her, and I wish something would happen to make her stop talking, no matter if it's not polite.

Just then my mother got up to go inside and she told Joe and me to come too. "It's going to rain," she said. "And besides, it's time for you to be in bed."

"We better cover up the rabbits, Joe," I told him. "Because if we don't they will get wet."

"You can," Joey said. "I don't want to."

"They're half yours," I said. "So you're supposed to do half the work."

Aunt Bertha had heard us, and she started talking.

"Shame on you, Joe," she said. "How would you like to be shut up in a box with the rain pouring down on you and the lightning flashing in your eyes. Would you like it?"

"I wouldn't care," Joe told her after a minute.

"All right then!" Aunt Bertha said. "If that's the way you feel Helen can have your part of the rabbits. And I will help her cover them up myself. Go on to bed now. The rabbits are both Helen's. It's what you deserve for being such a bad little boy."

"I don't care," Joe said. He said some more things half under his breath, and then he went into the house.

"You needn't think I'll change my mind," Aunt Bertha called out as we went around the house.

I got a piece of canvas from under the steps to cover the box with.

I almost wish we didn't have these rabbits, I was thinking to myself. All they do is eat and run away. I almost wish we had some other kind of animal instead that wasn't so much trouble.

Before we got to the pen even Aunt Bertha started talking to the rabbits. "Well, poor little bunnies, did you think we were going to let you stay out in the rain?"

But when I started to spread the canvas over them I could see by the light from the kitchen that the rabbits were not there.

"They're gone," I told Aunt Bertha. "I guess they've hopped off and hid in the weeds again."

"Well, we'll just have to find them then," Aunt Bertha said. "It would be terrible for them to be lost in there

during a storm. Run in the house and get a flash light."

"We haven't got one," I said. "But I guess we can see enough by the lightning."

"Come on then. Hurry," Aunt Bertha said in an excited voice. She ran toward the alley and I ran behind her. I didn't want to get hit by the lightning, but I had to mind Aunt Bertha and be polite to her like I had promised. I thought, I don't see why they couldn't stay in their box where they belong. They're too much trouble to be any fun.

Aunt Bertha stood on the edge of the weeds and started calling the rabbits. I thought to myself, they can hear her all right. They just want to keep hiding from her. A few drops of rain began to fall, and the thunder got louder. She kept calling the rabbits' names, and telling them to come out of the weeds before they got wet.

"They could stay dry under the leaves," I said to Aunt Bertha. "We ought to go in before we get struck by lightning."

"And let these helpless little animals stay out here and drown?" she said in a shocked voice. "Why, I couldn't sleep a wink tonight knowing they were out in the rain."

I pushed through the weeds and started looking, but I couldn't see the rabbits. I thought there might be a snake in there and I wanted to go in the house and let Aunt Bertha stay and look by herself. But I knew that wouldn't be polite.

Aunt Bertha stood there and told me what to do. "Go farther out," she said. "Go way out in the middle."

I went out a little farther. "There might be some

snakes out here," I told her.

"Of course there aren't," she said, "and anyway they would be harmless little garter snakes. They wouldn't hurt a flea. You ought to be ashamed to be such a coward."

So I went out a little more, and Aunt Bertha kept talking about how Cousin Clem would have done if he was in my place when he was my age. She was telling how she trained him not to be afraid of anything and to always think of others instead of himself.

The rain was coming down harder, and I was thinking: I wish Aunt Bertha would stop talking so much. I am tired of listening to her. Then all of a sudden Aunt Bertha made a funny sound and she did stop talking. She started spitting and sputtering. "Ugh," she said. Then she spit some more.

"What's the matter, Aunt Bertha?" I asked her. I hurried through the weeds to where she was. "Ugh," was all she said for a minute.

Then finally she said in a mad voice, "I almost swallowed a nasty little lightning bug, that's what."

"Oh," I said. I didn't know what else to say, so I didn't say anything. And neither did Aunt Bertha. I guess she was afraid to open her mouth again because another lightning bug might fly in. Every few minutes she would spit and say ugh, and just then I felt something hop across my feet, and first I thought it was a snake, but it was one of the rabbits, and in a minute I found the other one sitting under a little bush.

"Here they are, Aunt Bertha," I said. So I carried both

of them to the box and put them in it, but Aunt Bertha hurried on in the house without helping me.

When I had got the rabbits fixed I went in the kitchen, and Aunt Bertha was in there gargling a glass of water and saying ugh every few minutes. My mother was standing there looking worried and asking her questions, but Aunt Bertha wouldn't say anything.

"She nearly swallowed a lightning bug when we were looking for the rabbits," I told my mother.

"Ugh, don't talk about it," Aunt Bertha said, looking very mad at me.

I watched Aunt Bertha a minute, then I went upstairs. Joe was sitting up in bed counting the bottle tops he was saving.

"The rabbits got into the weeds again," I told him.

He kept on picking up the bottle tops and laying them in piles on the counterpane. He didn't say anything.

"Joe, something awful nearly happened to Aunt Bertha," I said after a while. "I told you it would if you kept on doing like you did."

I told him what had nearly happened. "You ought to been more polite and not said those things you kept saying," I told him.

Joe put the bottle tops in the box where he kept them, under his pillow.

Finally he said, "That's what she gets." He looked almost glad. "That's what she gets for always talking."

I didn't know what to say to Joe. He ought to be sorry, but he wasn't. But I didn't know how to make him be, so I stood there a minute, then I went on to bed.

The next day when the time came to feed the rabbits Aunt Bertha didn't call us. I waited a while, then I went out to feed them myself. But when I looked in their box they were gone.

I went out to the weeds and I looked and I called, but they were not there. Then I hurried around to the front porch where Aunt Bertha was sitting reading a magazine.

"Aunt Bertha, the rabbits have gone again," I told her. "I can't find them anywhere. Do you think we ought to look for them some more?"

"Ugh," Aunt Bertha said. "I don't want to even think about them."

I stood there a while to see if she would change her mind, but she only kept sitting, very quiet, and now and then she would shudder and make an awful face.

GOOD CITIZEN

W

E HAD BEEN READING

some stories about American Citizens in our English book, and on Friday when we went into Miss Waller the English teacher's room she said she wanted to make an announcement. Miss Waller was a medium young teacher and she was always kind to everybody. When any of the boys threw a paper wad in her room or anything like that, instead of getting mad she just looked sad at them, and sometimes she took them out in the hall and gave them a heart to heart talk. Some of the children said Miss Waller was crazy, but I didn't much think she was.

Miss Waller told us that we were going to form a Good Citizens Club in the basement that afternoon at two-thirty. She said anybody that wanted to could come to it. The children started asking questions. "What kind of club did you say?" they asked. "How much does it cost?" and some of them said, "Is it going to have refreshments?"

Miss Waller showed her teeth at us in a kind smile.

"We'll find out all those things this afternoon when you come," she said.

So that afternoon a lot of children from the fourth grade went down in the basement, and the boys were chasing each other around the room, but after a while Miss Waller came, and they quieted down and sat down on the lunchroom benches so Miss Waller could tell us about the club.

"First I want to tell you the purpose of this club," she said, looking around at us and smiling sort of serious. "Its purpose is to help others. Every day each member is supposed to go a good deed. For instance you might help an old lady across the street, or if there's a shut-in in your neighborhood you could go and read to them, or if you know of some tired mother that doesn't get out much you could offer to take care of her baby while she got a breath of fresh air. Oh, you'll find dozens of people to help if you'll only keep your eyes open. And every Friday we'll have a meeting down here and you can report on what you did for the week. And at the end of the term I think it would be nice if we had a vote on which boy or girl turned out to be the best little citizen. Wouldn't you like to do that?"

Some of the children said yes and some didn't say anything. "Now are there any questions?" Miss Waller asked us.

The children began to hold up their hands. "Miss Waller, can we have a wienie roast up on the ridge next week?" one of them said. And one asked, "Can we have a Halloween party?"

Miss Waller began to look sort of sad. "Boys and girls, you must remember the purpose of the club is to be good citizens, not just to have a good time," she said. "Maybe later on we can borrow the lunchroom kitchen and make some cookies or popcorn balls and sell them and give the money to some worthy charity. But mostly we're just going to meet and talk about our citizenship duties and learn how to be better citizens. Now remember next Friday you must have a report on all the good deeds you have done for a whole week, and let's see who can do the most. I want everybody to do at least one every day, but maybe some of you could do two or three."

When the meeting was over I hurried home as fast as I could so I could start being a good citizen. It was too late to do a good deed for anybody outside the family, but I didn't want that day to go by without doing one for somebody.

So as soon as I changed my clothes I started doing good deeds. I watered the grass in the front yard, and I fed a cat that I found on the sidewalk, and when supper was over I started telling Joey a story in the living room, but he kept getting up and down and walking around until I could hardly think of what came next.

"How can I tell you a story if you do that way, Joe?" I asked him. "It gets me mixed up for you to act like that. Why don't you sit still and listen?"

"You talk too fast," Joe said.

"All right then," I told him. "I won't tell you the rest and then you won't know what happened."

"I don't care," Joe said.

Just then my father came in from outside and he was looking sort of mad. "Who left that hose running?" he asked. "The whole front yard is flooded, and it's dripping all over the sidewalk. I want to know who left it running."

For a minute I didn't say anything, but I saw that my father was about to ask again, so I said, "I did."

"I'm a good notion to blister you," my father said, looking mad at me. "You had no business turning it on in the first place."

"I just wanted to water the yard for you," I told him. "I was just trying to do a good deed."

"What?" my father said. He looked surprised.

"We started a club at school today to be good citizens," I told him.

"Oh," he said. "Well, anyway you could have turned it off," he said after a minute. But he went on out of the room and I started to finish the story I was telling Joe, but he was gone. I looked behind all the furniture, but I couldn't find him anywhere. And when I went out to look for the cat to fix it a bed it was gone too. So I thought I would read the funny paper and rest a while from doing good deeds, then I could begin again the next day.

The next morning after breakfast as soon as I dried the dishes and made up my bed I began thinking what good deeds I could do. I couldn't think of any mother that needed her baby taken care of, but there were some old people in our block that I could read to. So I hurried

across the street to Mrs. Brody's house. Her mother was an old lady named Mrs. Harbison with white hair, that had to always keep sitting down, and she spent most of her time piecing quilts. She was sitting on the porch when I came up the walk.

"How are you, honey?" she asked me. She was cutting on some quilt pieces. I stood there and watched her.

"How's your mamma?" old Mrs. Harbison said.

"She's all right," I said. I didn't know what to say next. I stood there and looked at old Mrs. Harbison a while. She kept talking to herself and holding her quilt pieces up and looking at them.

"Mrs. Harbison, we have a club at school now where you're supposed to do things for sick people and things like that, so I thought I would come over here and see if you wanted me to read to you this morning," I told her after a while.

Old Mrs. Harbison began to count her quilt pieces. When she had counted them she looked at me through her glasses. She seemed to be thinking. "Twenty-four and eight's thirty-two, ain't it?" she said.

"I could read to you out of the paper."

She started muttering to herself and putting the red pieces in a little pile. "This ain't going to work out right," she said. "I don't believe it is."

"Or I could read to you out of the Bible, either one."

"No, honey, you run on and play," she said. She began to count the blue pieces over again.

I kept on standing there. I didn't know what to say next to old Mrs. Harbison.

"Or I could read out of any book you wanted me to."

"No, honey, run on," she said.

I didn't know anything else to say, so I started down the walk. I felt sort of funny. I was thinking, how can I be a good citizen to people that tell me to run on and play?

When I started across the street old Mrs. Harbison called after me in a loud voice, "Honey, ask your mamma if she's got any blue calico she don't need. This ain't going to work out right. I've got to have four more pieces to finish out a square."

I didn't say anything. I'm not going to ask her, I thought to myself. Even if she is an old lady. She wouldn't let me do a good deed, so I'm not going to ask my mother.

I went around to the back yard to see what Joey was doing. He was sitting there watching some ants, so I sat down too.

"Joey, do you want me to play with you?" I asked him.

"No," he said.

"We could make a playhouse or a tent or something."

"I don't want to," he said.

"Well, do you want me to tell you a story while you're sitting here?" I asked him.

"No," he said. He kept on watching the ants. He was poking at them with a piece of grass.

"All right, you'll be sorry," I told him. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, poking those ants like that."

I went in the house. I began to feel sort of disgusted.

I'm just trying to help people, I thought. How can I tell any good deeds at the Good Citizens Club next Friday if nobody will let me do any?

My mother was upstairs and there were some clothes soaking in the bath tub. I thought I would wash them and hang them out on the line and surprise her.

I found some dirty socks and things in the hamper, and I threw them in the water too and began to wash them. The water started turning blue and red and different colors, and so did the clothes. "That's funny," I thought. "I didn't know the colors would come out."

Just then my mother came in and she saw what I was doing. She let out a scream. "What in heaven's name are you doing to those clothes?" she said.

"I didn't mean to," I told her. "I was just trying to be a good citizen."

"Get out of here before I lose my temper," my mother said. She kept looking mad at me. "Go be a good citizen out in the yard."

I went out. I felt very bad. It looked as if every good deed I tried to do turned out to be a bad one. I could go and read to Mr. Welkin, I thought, in the next block. He was an old man that had something wrong with his stomach, and I knew he didn't much like children. But it seemed as if I was too tired to go down there, and besides Mr. Welkin, being deaf, he might not be able to hear me read. So I thought I would wait till some other time. I thought I would keep hunting for the cat I had found the night before and feed it and let that be my good deed for that day.

The week went on by and pretty soon it was time for the Good Citizens Club to meet again. Nearly every time I had tried to help somebody that week they had told me not to do it. When I got up on the street car to give a lady my seat she said she was only going a few blocks and she would rather stand up. When I offered to help an old man across the street he said he could walk by himself. When I asked a lady if I could hold her baby while she went in the store she said no I might drop it. It made it very hard to do good deeds when nobody wanted them done to them.

Friday when we went into Miss Waller's room she asked those who were going to stay for the meeting to hold up their hands. I held mine up. There were only four in all. Miss Waller looked surprised.

"What's wrong with the rest of you?" she asked.
"Why can't the rest of you stay?"

Nobody said anything.

"Why can't you stay, Mabel?" Miss Waller asked.

"I've got a invitation to a surprise birthday party, and I have to go to that," Mabel said.

Miss Waller began to look sort of hurt. "Of course if you're going to let things like that interfere . . ." she said. She looked at the other children. "Why can't the rest of you stay?" she asked them.

Some of them said they had to get a hair cut, and some had to take their music lessons, and some had to go somewhere with their mothers.

Miss Waller looked sadder and sadder. Her eyes looked big and sad through her glasses. "I'm so disappointed,"

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she said. "I thought all of you would give noon a week for the good of your commun I was wrong."

It won't be much fun with only four, I almost wished I hadn't held up my ha Waller was looking like she was going to cry, ~~and~~ I thought I better go on and stay for the meeting like I had said, then maybe she wouldn't feel so bad.

That afternoon when the rest of the children had gone we went down in the basement to have the meeting. We sat on the lunchroom benches again, over in one corner of the room. It seemed very quiet because there were so few. We could hear some children skating on the school sidewalk, and some playing football on the playground. I was hungry. I almost wished I was somewhere else.

But Miss Waller told us that she was glad there were four children in the fourth grade that were interested in developing their characters and doing worth while things. She smiled at us a little. "You won't regret it," she said. "When you get older you will think of this club and be thankful you belonged to it and tried to be useful to your community instead of spending all your time on unimportant things. And now shall we tell about the ways you have been good citizens this week? Then later we can talk about our plans for the future."

So we told about what we had done and Miss Waller said she thought it was splendid. She said we had made a good beginning.

"I have several projects in mind," she told us then.

"Later on I think we'll be able to visit the Home for Friendless Babies and have a story hour for the kiddies. But we'll have to work that out in detail later. But I have a nice little plan for next Tuesday afternoon. Out at the Old Ladies Home on Woodlawn Pike there are fifteen dear old ladies, just like your own grandmothers, and they must get very lonely sometimes. I think it would be lovely if we went out and had a little program for them and cheered them up; would you like to do that?"

We all said we would.

"What do you think would be nice to do to entertain them?" Miss Waller asked.

"I could do a tap dance in my pirate costume," Leroy Bishop said. He was a sort of sissy little boy with white hair. "I guess they'd like that."

"That would be very nice, Leroy," Miss Waller said. "The only thing is, perhaps that would be a little exciting for them. You see they are very frail old ladies, and I thought they would enjoy it more if we just sang to them, some of the songs they heard when they were young. I thought we could practice on some this afternoon, and I think it would be lovely if you would put your dimes together and get them some kind of potted plant that they could keep in the reception room and all enjoy. Would you like that?"

We all said yes, and Miss Waller looked very pleased. "I think that's lovely," she said. "Now shall we get around the piano and go over some of the things we're going to sing?"

So we got around the piano and Miss Waller sat down

on the bench and played for us, and we sang some songs. We sang When You And I Were Young, Maggie, and Silver Threads Among The Gold, and I Weep For Jeanie With The Light Brown Hair, and things like that. We could all sing pretty good except Leroy Bishop and he sang too loud, and I tried to sing a little louder so he wouldn't sound so awful.

"That was very good," Miss Waller said when we had finished. "Only I think perhaps we had better make our voices just a tiny bit softer. Remember these are very delicate old ladies and we must sing quietly if they are to enjoy it."

Then she told us the meeting was over and we could go home and to remember to keep on doing good deeds and to bring our dimes, and Tuesday night after school we would go on the street car to sing for the old ladies.

As soon as I got home I told my mother what we were going to do. She was making some curtains or something on the sewing machine.

"That's fine," she said.

"Do you want to hear me sing the songs we are going to sing?" I asked her.

"No, not now," she said. "I can't really listen right now."

I went out in the back yard. Joey was out there on the steps looking at a funny paper and eating a cookie.

"Joe, guess what we're going to do at school next week," I said.

"What?" he said.

"We're going to the Old Ladies Home," I told him.

"Oh," he said. He didn't seem to be surprised. He kept on chewing and he looked at me a minute, then he began reading the paper again.

"We're going to sing to them," I said. "I came out here to practice. You can listen to me if you want to."

I started singing, and I sang two songs, and Joe kept on reading and paying no attention, and finally I stopped to rest a minute.

"Now I'm going to sing Down By The Old Mill Stream," I said.

But just then he got up and took his paper around the house to the front yard. "All right," I told him. "You don't have to listen if you don't want to." So I sang it all the way through to myself, and then I went to look for a good deed to do.

Every time I had a chance before Tuesday I practiced singing. I tried to make my voice soft like Miss Waller said, but it was hard to find somebody to listen to me practice. It seemed as if everybody was always too busy. I would go in the living room after supper and play on the piano and sing at the same time and the first time my father asked me to stop it because it kept him from concentrating, and when I told him why I was doing it he said oh and went somewhere else. And every time I asked my mother to listen she said not now, and Joey would run away every time. But I did the best I could and finally Tuesday came and at two-thirty we met in Miss Waller's room.

We had given Miss Waller our dimes and she had

bought a geranium plant with them. "I guess they'll be glad to get this, don't you, Miss Waller?" Patsy said, looking at the geranium.

"Yes indeed they will," Miss Waller said.

On the way to the car we saw the other fourth grade children out on the sidewalks and playing in their yards.

"I guess they wish now they'd come to the meeting, don't they, Miss Waller?" Leroy Bishop asked. "Now that we're going to have a little fun I guess they wish they were going too."

"Yes, but we must remember that it's not to give ourselves pleasure that we're doing this," Miss Waller said. "It's to bring pleasure to others."

"I know it," Leroy said. He made an awful face at the children we were passing when Miss Waller wasn't looking.

On the car I sat by Miss Waller. I tried to think of something serious to say to her, but I had never sat by a teacher before, and I couldn't think of anything. So I looked out of the window. I was wishing the car would get crowded so I could get up and give my seat to somebody, but it didn't and pretty soon it was time for us to get off, and we were at the Old Ladies Home.

It was a big brick building on a kind of a hill and with a long walk leading to the street. A sign over the door said Rest Haven. When we got on the porch Miss Waller rang the bell, then she turned around and showed her teeth at us in a smile.

The door opened and a nervous looking lady was standing there. "How do you do, come right in," she

kept saying, holding the door open for us. We stood around in the hall. We stayed close together waiting for whatever would happen.

"I am Marcella Waller from the Park Street School, Mrs. Goodwin," Miss Waller said. "And these boys and girls are from our Good Citizens Club that I told you about on the phone."

"Well, bless their little hearts," Mrs. Goodwin said, looking kind at us.

"And here is a plant they bought with their very own money," Miss Waller said, giving her the geranium. "We thought you could put it somewhere where all the old ladies could enjoy it."

"Yes, indeed," Mrs. Goodwin said. "Come right in here. This is where we have our little gatherings. I'll put the plant right here on the table."

We followed her into a big room. There was an old lady sitting in there reading a magazine. She stared at us when we came in.

"This is Mrs. Smitty, one of our guests," Mrs. Goodwin said. "Mrs. Smitty, these are the little children I told you about, remember, that were coming to sing for us? And they brought us this nice plant, too. Isn't that nice? Now I'll just run upstairs and tell the others you've come if you'll just excuse me one minute. Make yourselves at home."

Miss Waller went over to where Mrs. Smitty was and sat down on a chair by her. We sat down on the sofa. Mrs. Smitty kept staring at Miss Waller and us. She didn't say anything. Finally she got up and went and

looked at the geranium plant. Miss Waller showed her teeth, smiling at Mrs. Smitty.

"The children thought you would enjoy a potted plant," she said. "They bought it with their own dimes."

Mrs. Smitty went back and sat down. "I never did have no use for a geranium," she said.

We looked at Miss Waller to see what she would say. For a minute she looked almost a little mad. Then she smiled at Mrs. Smitty.

"Some people like them very much," she said. "They're such a cheerful flower."

"A geranium is about the nearest to nothing of any flower you can have," Mrs. Smitty said. She looked at us one more time, then she started reading her magazine again.

Miss Waller was opening her mouth but just then we heard steps coming down the stairs, and it was Mrs. Goodwin with five or six old ladies. They all had white hair and black dresses on. Miss Waller jumped up when they came in the room, and she motioned for us to get up too and give the old ladies our seats. So we stood up, but the old ladies went on the other side of the room and sat in some other chairs.

Mrs. Goodwin seemed sort of excited. "I think some of the others will be down after a while," she said. "I told them what a treat they had in store for them, and some said they would come down later. But maybe you could begin now, and the others could just slip in if they decide to come down."

"Well, I thought—" Miss Waller started to say, but

Mrs. Goodwin said to her low, "Sometimes they're cranky, and when they get that way it's better to leave them alone till they get over it."

"I understand," Miss Waller said in a whisper. "That's perfectly all right."

Then Miss Waller smiled at the old ladies and told them that we were the Good Citizens Club and we had come to entertain them. She told them about the geranium and they all looked at it, but not as if they cared much about it.

"And now would you like us to sing for you?" she asked them. "We thought we would sing some of the old favorites. We thought you might enjoy that."

The old ladies looked at her. For a minute they didn't say anything.

"We've heard everything," one of them said after a while. She was sort of fat with a red face. "We hear the very best all the time." She started fanning herself with a newspaper that was by her chair. "Mr. Willys and his string quartet comes and plays for us every Sunday, and we hear the very best over the radio all through the week."

"Yes, Mrs. Poley, but think how nice it is of these boys and girls to want to come and sing for us," Mrs. Goodwin said quickly. "They came all the way out here on the car, and I think it was very sweet of them. I'm sure we all appreciate it."

"There was some school gave us a fruit shower," one old lady said. She was little and she had a squeaky voice. "They sent us all a grape basket full."

"Yes, but that was a whole *school*," Mrs. Goodwin said.

"We hear the very best on the radio," the fat old lady said again. The rest of the old ladies didn't say anything. They just sat looking at us as if they were waiting to see if we could sing very well.

"First we'll sing a song everybody loves, Listen To The Mocking Bird," Miss Waller said. Her face was sort of red. She looked sort of mad. She sat down at the piano and played some of it, then we sang it. The old ladies sat there listening and staring at us, except Mrs. Smitty, and she kept reading her magazine. When we finished they didn't clap.

"Now what would you like?" Miss Waller asked them, turning around on the stool and smiling at them. "Is there any special song you would like to hear?"

For a minute nobody said anything. Then the fat one said, "It don't matter. Whatever you want to sing. We've heard everything anyway."

Miss Waller gave the fat one a long look. She began to play My Darling Nelly Gray, and we sang it. And we sang three or four more songs and after every song Mrs. Goodwin would say, "Oh, that was so sweet." But the old ladies didn't clap and they didn't say they liked it, and they didn't look as if they cared whether we sang or not. And I began to get out of breath and I began to think, this is not like I thought it would be. I almost wish I hadn't joined this club, I almost wish I was at home playing instead of here being a good citizen.

After we had sung about five songs Mrs. Goodwin tip-

toed over to Miss Waller and whispered something to her. I could hear what she said. She said the old ladies were getting restless because it was time for the shut-in club on the radio, and that if we didn't mind, we could come back and sing some more another time.

"Of course," Miss Waller said, jumping up and stretching her mouth at Mrs. Goodwin. "Come on, children," she said to us.

"And we've enjoyed you so much," Mrs. Goodwin said out loud, and she patted some of us on the heads. "We thought it was just lovely, didn't we, ladies? Such sweet little voices!"

But the old ladies just kept looking at us as if they wished we would go on.

"It was very pretty," the squeaky one said after a while.

"Anyway when you remember they're just children," another old lady said.

Mrs. Goodwin took us to the door. "Come again," she told us as we were going out. "Any time. Just call me up first. We have to make arrangements, you know."

"Oh yes," Miss Waller said. "I understand."

Mrs. Goodwin kept waving and smiling at us as we went down the steps. "Bye, bye," she called.

We stood on the corner waiting for the street car.

"How did we do, Miss Waller?" Leroy Bishop asked her. "Did you think we sang good?"

"Yes indeed," Miss Waller said.

"When are we going back?" Adelaide asked.

"I don't know," Miss Waller said.

"I guess we cheered them up, don't you?" Patsy said.
"I bet those other kids wish they had come."

But I didn't say anything. I was thinking, I wish I had my dime back, that's what I wish. I don't think it was any fun at all. I'm going to stop being a good citizen right now. I'm sick and tired of being one. It's too much trouble.

So the next week I didn't do any good deeds, and I didn't try to be kind to people. I played all the time when I didn't have to work. And when the day for the club meeting came and Miss Waller asked who would be there, nobody but Leroy Bishop and Patsy and Adelaide held up their hands. I kept mine down.

"Why, Helen, what's the matter with you?" asked Miss Waller, beginning to look sad. "Do you mean to say that you're going to fail us? I thought I could depend on you."

"I have to go straight home from school after this," I said. "I can't come to the meeting any more."

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it," Miss Waller said. She looked at me as if she was going to cry, but I didn't feel very sorry for her.

The next week after that Patsy started taking violin lessons on Fridays and she had to quit, and Adelaide wouldn't stay with just a boy, so of all the good citizens that there had been once, Leroy Bishop was ~~the only~~ one left.

P R I N C E S S T H E R U N A W A Y C A T

J

OE AND I WERE PLAYING IN the back yard when we noticed a cat in the alley. It was on top of the garbage can with its tail and its hind feet sticking out, and it was scratching around among the peelings and things hunting for something to eat.

"Look, Joe," I said. "There's a cat in our garbage can."

Joe put down his hammer and looked. Then he picked up a rock. "I'll run it off," he said.

"No, Joe, don't do that," I told him in a hurry. "Let's see what kind of a cat it is first."

Joe held the rock in his hand and we went up close to the garbage can to see the cat better. When it heard us coming it jumped down and ran a little way, then it turned around and looked at us with its ears flattened down and its eyes wide. It was a bony, hungry-looking cat and its fur was pretty ragged. It was black and brown and gray mixed with a little white. It had a wild look.

"I believe it's hungry," I said after we had watched it for a while. "I think we ought to feed it."

Joey still had the rock, and he looked like he wanted to throw it. "Joey, you stand here and watch the cat a

minute," I said. "Don't let it run off, and I'll go get it some milk."

When I looked in the ice box there was some boiled ham and a wienie, so I brought that too.

That cat was still there, crouching down with a fierce expression. When I called Kitty, kitty, it gave me a dirty look and stayed where it was, but when I put the food down on the ground it hurried up to it. It gave the saucer of milk a disgusted glance, and turned its back on it, but 't ate the meat down at one gulp.

Then it came into the back yard and started walking around glaring at things.

"That's funny," I told Joe. "I never saw a cat before that didn't like milk."

While we were standing there watching it, my mother came out.

"Where did that dirty thing come from?" she asked.

"We found him in the alley," I said.

"Well, you can put him right back in the alley," said my mother.

"But we're going to fix a bed for it," I said. "It hasn't got any home. We're going to keep it here."

"Ugh," my mother said, looking at it. "Scat!" She picked up a clod and threw it at the cat. The cat gave her a mad look, then it hurried out of the yard and down the alley.

"If it comes back, chase it off again," my mother said. "I never saw a more repulsive looking animal in my life. I'm not going to have it around here spreading fleas."

She began to take the clothes off the line.

I stood there feeling sorry for the cat. "Now it will be hungry," I said. "It won't have anywhere to sleep."

"Don't worry," my mother said. "It can take care of itself."

"How would you like to live in an alley and eat out of garbage cans?" I asked my mother. "How would you like for people to throw rocks at you?"

"I wouldn't like it, but I'm not a cat, and if you don't watch out, young lady, you're going to find yourself inside the house sitting in a corner with your face to the wall."

She yanked the sheets down off the line. She seemed to be sort of mad about something, so I didn't say anything else until she had gone in the house.

"Joe," I said then. "Let's fix a bed in the coal house and leave the door open. We can put some food in there and if the cat comes back, he'll have a place to stay."

"I don't want to," said Joe. "I have to nail."

"All right then, I will," I told him. "And when the cat does come back it will be all mine. None of it will belong to you."

"I don't want any of it," Joe said. "It looks awful."

Joe went back to the house he had been building and I got a wooden box and put some tow sacks and an old blanket in it. I got some bacon out of the kitchen and put it on a dish close to the bed.

"Now if it comes I can't help it," I told Joe. "If it finds the bed and sleeps on it, it's not my fault. Anyway, by tomorrow I don't believe she will care."

Sure enough, the next morning when I went out to look the meat was gone, and there was the cat in the coal house asleep on top of the coal pile.

"Look, Joe," I said. Joe came to the coal house door.

"I never saw a cat like this one," I said. "Most cats would rather sleep on a blanket."

"Maybe it's a wild cat," Joey said.

"He's different from all the cats I ever saw," I said. "He looks different and he acts different."

My father was in the back yard walking around and looking at the weather before he went to work. He came up to where we were.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Look, papa." I pointed to the cat. "We found him in the alley yesterday. What kind of a cat do you think he is?"

"Well, that's hard to say," my father said, looking carefully at the cat. "He seems to be a kind of a mixture."

"He won't drink milk and he won't sleep in a bed," I said.

"That's probably because he's not used to luxury," said my father. "He looks like a pretty tough cat. He reminds me a lot of one we had on the farm when I was a boy; it looked something like this one. That cat was quite a character. I remember one night at prayer meeting we heard a commotion outside the church, and all of a sudden in came two hound dogs through the window with Mose right behind them with his fur standing up all

over his back and his tail as big as my arm. He chased them across the rostrum and all around the room. It caused quite a disturbance."

"What did you say his name was?" I asked.

"Well, there was an old man in the neighborhood," said my father. "He was nearly always half drunk but he had a good heart. He saved this cat from drowning when it was just a kitten, and he gave it to my sister to raise, so she named it Mose Hankins after him."

"We could name this cat for him too if it looks like yours," I told my father. "We haven't thought of a name for it yet."

My father looked pleased. "Of course it's not likely," he said, "but this cat might be related to Mose. He had kittens from one end of the county to the other. It's not impossible that this is one of his distant grandchildren. There certainly is a strong resemblance."

So after that I called the cat Mose Hankins.

My mother wouldn't give me permission to keep him, and every time she saw him she chased him away, but he kept on sleeping in our coal house all day, and at night he would go off somewhere. Sometimes we would hear awful sounding cat fights in the empty lot across the alley, and it must have been Mose Hankins, because the next morning he would have a few more chewed places on his ears, and some of his fur would be pulled off in patches.

It was about a week after Mose Hankins came that I was swinging under the sweet-gum tree one afternoon

and I heard a sad meowing, and when I looked there was another cat coming into our yard from under the next door people's hedge.

This cat was very different from Mose Hankins. It had long reddish fur and a fluffy tail. When I called it, it came running over to where I was, mewing and looking very sorry for itself. It had a red leather collar around its neck. The cat began to rub against my feet and mew in a very pitiful voice.

"Poor kitty," I said, and it opened its mouth and mewed louder than ever.

I sat there and looked at it a minute, then I went into the house to get it something to eat. I brought a saucer of milk out and put it on the sidewalk and the cat hurried to it and lapped it up. It seemed to be pretty hungry, but it had good manners, and after it had finished it sat down and began to wash its fur with its tongue.

My mother was sewing in the living room and just then she happened to look out. She gave a mad sound. "Helen Marsden, are you feeding another cat?" she asked me.

Before I had time to answer she threw down what she was sewing on and came out to the porch.

"What is this, anyway?" she asked as she came. "A home for stray animals? You can get rid of it right this minute. I'm going to stop this right now before it goes any farther."

"But it's not hurting anything," I said. "Besides, this is a tame one. I think it's lost."

"Well, let it stay lost," said my mother. "We can't afford to buy milk for every cat that happens to pass by. Put it out on the sidewalk before it gets the idea that it's welcome here."

She stood there watching me, so I picked up the cat and put it outside, but when I came back into the yard it came in behind me. I looked to see if my mother had noticed, but she had gone back into the house.

Well, I did what she said, I thought. And if it keeps coming back, how can I help it?

The cat went back to washing itself, and I sat in the swing and tried to think up a good name for it.

That night we were sitting at the supper table and my father was telling my mother something, when all of a sudden the new cat came in through the front door and jumped up in my mother's lap. She was starting to drink her coffee and she dropped the cup and gave a scream. When she saw who it was she said to me very mad, "Helen, I thought I told you to get rid of this cat."

"I did," I told her. "I put it out on the sidewalk like you said."

"Scat!" My mother got up and pushed the cat onto the floor. "I never could stand a cat, especially in the house. They give me the creeps."

I looked at the cat. For just a minute there was a funny expression on its face. Its eyes got narrow and mad looking.

But then it began to mew in a pitiful voice. It went over to my father and rubbed against his leg. My father

reached down and patted its head. "I always liked cats myself," he said. "I remember an old tomcat we used to have on the farm . . ."

"You mean Mose Hankins?" I asked

"Yes," he said. Then he looked at the new cat. "This cat looks like it might be valuable."

"All cats are alike to me," my mother said, mopping up the spilled coffee. "And this one is going back where it came from. Put it outside, Helen, before it does any more damage."

"Somebody is probably looking for this cat right now," my father said. "She has every appearance of being a full blooded Persian."

"She!" said my mother. "That settles it!" She picked up the cat and put it out the front door. "Get," she said.

The cat stood there looking at us through the screen. It kept giving loud mournful meows. It looked sad and helpless.

"That cat has been used to good treatment, you can tell that," my father said. "She has a collar too. That proves she's no common cat. We ought to put an advertisement in the paper and try to find the owner."

"If the owner wants it, let him do the advertising," said my mother. "Why should you spend two or three dollars on somebody else's cat? Besides, I haven't got time to keep answering the telephone."

My father looked sort of sad at my mother. "That's a very selfish spirit, Louise," he told her. "That's the kind of thing that's put the human race in the fix it's in today. If more people thought of their fellow men and less

of their own convenience the world would be a better place to live in."

"That's all very well," my mother said. "But it has nothing to do with the question."

"Anyway, we will watch the paper." All of a sudden my father cheered up. "Sooner or later whoever she belongs to is bound to want her back."

"You mean we can keep her until then?" I asked.

"Not in the house, though," my mother said quickly. "The minute it comes back in, off it goes. I'm not going to have a cat underfoot, no matter how blueblooded it is. You can keep it out of doors for two or three days if you want to."

"But it might catch cold out there," I said.

"No it won't, not in August. Don't be sentimental," said my mother, beginning to stack up the dishes.

"What could we name her?" I asked my father when my mother had gone into the kitchen. "We ought to call her something even if she doesn't stay long."

"Well, let me see," my father said. "My grandmother had a cat once named Lady. It was a gentle, affectionate cat like this one seems to be."

"I think that's a good name," I said. "Don't you, Joe?"

But Joe was reaching for the rice pudding, and he paid no attention. He didn't seem to be very interested in the cat.

After I dried the supper dishes I went out in the back yard to see if any more apples had fallen off of the tree,

and while I was there Mose Hankins came around the corner of the coal house from the alley. He was swinging his tail from side to side and he looked very wild and tough.

The new cat Lady was sitting on the walk washing her paws. When she saw Mose Hankins an interested expression came on her face. She sat very still and stared at him. She gave a meow, but Mose Hankins walked on past her and began to sharpen his claws on the trunk of the apple tree.

Lady watched him for a minute, then she got up and went over to where he was. Mose Hankins happened to look up and see her and he gave her a glare, and went around to the other side of the tree. Lady followed him, giving polite sounding meows. Mose Hankins didn't seem to like the way she looked, because all of a sudden he reached out his claws and gave her a hard scratch. Then he walked away toward the alley.

Lady stood there a minute, looking like she had in the dining room. For a minute I thought she might not be as gentle and affectionate a cat as my father had said. But then she gave a pitiful mew, and she started following Mose. "Come back here, Lady," I said. She didn't pay any attention to me. "Kitty, kitty," I called, but she didn't turn around.

Mose Hankins looked back once over his shoulder and he gave a fttt when he saw that she was coming. His hair stood up on his back and his eyes glared. But Lady didn't stop. When Mose Hankins saw that she was going to come anyway he looked pretty wild and he ran down

the alley as hard as he could go. I hurried out there to try to catch Lady before she went too far, but it was too late. She was away past the Dosset's garage, and Mose Hankins was about six feet in front of her, and he was looking back and hissing, but it wasn't doing any good.

"Now she's done it!" I thought. "She'll get lost again, and whoever she belongs to will never find her." I went in the house and told my father.

"What?" he said. He seemed to have forgotten about the cat. When I told him again he said, "You should have watched her better. A cat like that doesn't know how to take care of itself like a common cat does. That's the last you'll ever see of that cat alive."

Then he went back to reading the paper.

But it turned out that my father was wrong. The next day Lady came back. She looked like she had traveled a long way. Her fur was full of cockleburrs and spanish needles, and she was limping a little. But now she didn't seem to feel sad or sorry for herself. She came into the yard swinging her tail in the same tough way that Mose Hankins did, and when I offered her a saucer of milk she gave a disgusted meow and would hardly look at it. When I gave her a piece of meat she swallowed it in one bite. When I started to pat her head she backed away and went over to the apple tree and started sharpening her claws.

"She acts different," I told Joe. "She acts nearly as wild as Mose Hankins. We better fix a pen to keep her in so she'll be safe."



—the other side of the tree

I looked in the basement and found the box that we had kept the rabbits in, and I put a few bones in it, then I started to put Lady in it but she raised up her fur and gave a mad fttt, and when I tried to pick her up she scratched my arm and ran up the apple tree and crouched up in the top branches glaring down at me.

I thought I better leave her alone. "She acts worse than any cat I ever saw," I told Joe. "I was trying to take care of her, and look what she did. Even Mose Hankins doesn't act that way. After this she can get her own food. She can take care of herself the best way she can. I don't care what happens to her."

But nothing happened to her except that every day she got wilder and tougher. If she saw another cat or a dog she would hump up her back and let out a fierce sound and then she would rush at it and start a fight. And if a person started toward her she would spit at them and flatten out her ears and look terrible. Even Mose Hankins seemed to be shocked at the way she acted. Several times when he started to take something away from her she clawed him and spit at him, and when she did that instead of fighting he would go to the other side of the yard and get behind something and look out at her in a surprised way.

Lady never seemed to need any sleep. She spent the day chasing dogs and taking away their bones and sharpening her claws getting ready for the night. Then as soon as it got dark there would be wild sounding yowls from the vacant lot. All through the night I would wake up and hear sounds of scrambling and cat yells. And every

day Lady had a more chewed-up look, but the cats of the neighborhood looked even worse, so she must have won most of the fights.

We kept looking in the paper every night to see if there was an advertisement, but there never was one.

"It makes me feel guilty," my father said. "It's not honest to keep that cat a whole week, and do nothing to find the owner."

"Anybody would be crazy to want that cat back," said my mother. "Whoever she belongs to knows when he's well off. I never saw such a cat. It's beginning to get on my nerves. I no sooner get to sleep at night until that squawking and howling begins right outside the window and keeps up until morning."

"Well, she's probably led a sheltered life up to now," my father said thoughtfully. "Probably her freedom has gone to her head."

"That's no excuse," my mother said. "If somebody doesn't claim her before Monday I'm going to call the Humane Society and have them come out here and do away with her."

"You don't mean kill her, do you?" I asked my mother, shocked.

"Yes I do," she said. "They'll do it in some painless way and it'll all be over in a minute. The next thing you know the neighbors are going to start complaining, and who could blame them? It's reached the point where it's either my sanity or that cat!"

The next day was Sunday. We had stopped taking the

Morning Journal the month before, but this time the paper boy left one on our porch by mistake. My mother had taken Joey to Sunday School because I had a cold. I was looking at the funnies, and my father was reading the rest of the paper, and all of a sudden he gave a surprised sound.

"What, papa?" I asked.

"Listen," he said. He read out loud, "Lost or strayed. Imperial Highness's Royal Princess, Female Red Persian. Property of Mrs. Allison Tatewood, 432 Bellevue Drive. If found please notify owner immediately. Liberal reward."

"That's her all right," my father said. "It was probably in the *Journal* all the time."

"Does that mean we get some money for finding her?" I asked my father, but he was already at the telephone dialing the number, and he shook his head at me to hush so he could hear.

When the lady at the other end understood that we had found her cat her voice got very loud and I could hear her talking all the way across the room.

"Thank God!" she said. "I've been nearly frantic. I'll be right over, as soon as I can get there." And a lot of crackles and more excited talking.

When my father hung up we went out in the back yard to find Lady and have her ready when Mrs. Tatewood came.

"How much do you think we'll get?" I asked him. My father looked shocked.

"Nothing, of course," he said. "You wouldn't take

money for doing what any honest person would do."

Yes I would, I thought. I could take it and be honest at the same time.

We found Lady out in the alley chewing on a piece of raw meat. It looked like some dog's dinner. "We mustn't make her nervous," my father said. He started talking to her and going toward her very quietly. She stopped eating, and her fur began to go up. Her eyes glared at him, and she began to spit.

"Nice kitty," my father said, going slower. When he started to pick her up she gave a yowl, and stuck her claws into his wrist.

"Ouch," my father said. He started to say something else, then he looked at me and didn't say it. Lady picked up the piece of meat and gave my father another glare, then she went down the alley as fast as she could go.

"I'll have to go get her," my father said. "You stay here and answer the door if Mrs. Tatewood comes before I get back."

Almost as soon as my father got out of sight the front doorbell rang and when I went, it was Mrs. Tatewood. She was a medium-sized sort of redfaced lady and she had come in a big blue car.

"I'm Mrs. Allison Tatewood," she said. "Was it your father that called me?"

"Yes ma'am," I said.

"I've been simply out of my mind. I just stepped out of the apartment for a minute last Tuesday morning, and I must have left the door cracked open, because when I got back she was gone. Well, when I put that

advertisement in the paper and waited for days and got no answer I thought she had been drowned or run over or something. I've been worried sick. Where is she?"

"You mean your cat?" I asked.

"Of course." She looked at me surprised. "Naturally," she said in a sort of sarcastic voice.

"My father is bringing her now," I said. "We better sit down and wait for him."

Mrs. Tatewood sat down on the edge of the porch swing, and I sat down too.

"We looked in the *News* every night, but we never saw where anybody had lost a cat," I said.

"I'm a Republican," said Mrs. Tatewood. "Naturally I wouldn't advertise in a Democratic paper."

"Oh," I said.

I tried to think of something else. "Is your cat a very valuable cat?" I asked her after a while. "When she first came my father thought she might be."

Mrs. Tatewood looked shocked. "Certainly she is," she said. "She's won the blue ribbon in her class every year in the Southern Cat Club show. That's one reason I've been so nervous about her disappearing like this. I wanted to enter her in the Southeastern Cat Association show next month. I hope you've been careful about her diet. She has a very delicate digestion."

I didn't say anything.

Mrs. Tatewood began to act nervous and impatient. "How long do you think it will take your father?" she asked.

"Maybe we better go look for him," I said. We went

around the house. Mose Hankins was there in the back yard, staring with a hungry expression at a bird in the apple tree.

"That's Mose Hankins," I told Mrs. Tatewood. "He's our cat. We found him in the alley. I think it's partly his fault that your cat acts like she does now. I think she must have got some of her wild manners from being around him."

Mrs. Tatewood looked at Mose and gave a shudder. Then she looked at me with a shocked expression. "What did you say?" she asked.

Just then I looked down the alley and saw my father. "Here he comes with her now," I said.

My father was holding Lady and she was kicking and squirming and yowling, and he looked like he was about to drop her.

"See, that's how she does," I explained to Mrs. Tatewood.

Mrs. Tatewood gave a loud scream and rushed toward my father. As soon as he got close enough he dumped the cat in Mrs. Tatewood's arms and stood there breathing hard.

"Well, I finally got her!" he said in a cheerful voice. "She led me quite a chase, and she scratched me up some, but I finally caught her just inside that lot on Sycamore Street."

But Mrs. Tatewood wasn't paying any attention to him. She was almost crying, and she was talking at the top of her voice.

"Look at her coat!" she was saying. "I'll never in the

world get her back in condition in time for the show, not even if I work night and day."

Mrs. Tatewood gave my father a glare. "You'd think anybody with a grain of sense in their heads would know how to take care of a cat," she said. "You'd think even a fool would see that this was no ordinary cat and had to be treated accordingly."

My father looked surprised. He opened his mouth to say something, but Mrs. Tatewood didn't give him a chance. "Exposing her to every disease under the sun and giving her God knows what all to eat," she said in a loud mad voice.

"But we . . ." my father began.

Just then the cat gave a wild jump and almost got away, but Mrs. Tatewood caught her in time by her hind legs. "Poor little thing, she's almost crazy with fear. Missus will take you home," she said to the cat. "Missus will give you some good beef juice and put you in your nice soft bed."

When she said that the cat looked wilder than ever and gave a loud meow and stuck her claws in Mrs. Tatewood, but Mrs. Tatewood held firmly to her and started toward her car talking as she went about what awful people we were and that she was going to report us to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

"But Mrs. . . ." My father followed her around to the front and he kept saying, "But we didn't . . ." Mrs. Tatewood wouldn't listen. She opened the door and put Royal Princess in the back seat and started the car with a jerk, giving us one more mad look as she went. The last

we saw of the cat it was climbing up the upholstery and trying to jump out the closed window.

My father stood there and watched the car disappear. Finally he let out a long breath. "Well, that's gratitude for you!" he said.

"Anyway, she got one good scratch," I told my father. "And I bet she'll get plenty more when she tries to get Royal Princess out of the car."

For a minute my father looked at me almost pleased. Then he straightened out his face. "You mustn't have a spirit like that," he said quickly.

We went into the house. "The greatest thing anyone can have is charity," he said, looking in the medicine cabinet for the iodine bottle.

THE INDIAN ROOT EXTRACT

M

Y MOTHER HAD FINISHED the supper dishes and she came into the living room and sat down by the lamp with her sewing basket. She took out a pair of socks and looked at a big hole in the heel, then she put them down and just sat there.

"I declare," she said under her breath. "I don't know what's wrong with me lately. I never have felt so trifling before."

I was sitting there doing my home work. "What's wrong, mother?" I asked her.

"I just haven't got any energy. It's too much effort even to move. I don't believe I could mend that sock if my life depended on it."

My father was sitting there working a puzzle out of the paper. "Egyptian sun god," he said, staring at my mother. "Do you know an Egyptian sun god?"

"I can't remember any," she said. "I haven't got enough strength to think." She sat back in her chair and gave a long breath.

"That reminds me," said my father in a cheerful voice. "You know people used to think that fish was



I just haven't got any energy

brain food? Well sir, a doctor has just worked out an experiment that completely explodes that theory. There's an interesting article on it in this month's *Everybody's Digest*."

"That's nice," my mother said. She gave a yawn. "I think I'll go to bed. Maybe I'll feel better after a good night's sleep."

"Another thing this same doctor proved was that the best hours for sleep are between ten and midnight," said my father. "He made some very interesting experiments on college students. Do you know how many times the average person changes their sleeping position during the night?"

"No, I haven't any idea," my mother said.

"Eighty-nine times," said my father. "Or a hundred and eighty-nine times. I've forgotten which."

"Sure enough?" my mother said. She took her sewing basket and went upstairs.

My father started frowning over the puzzle again. "Latin for to seek," he said out loud to himself. "My father wanted me to take Latin in high school, but I didn't see the use of it then. I never thought I would need it. You never know about a thing like that till it's too late."

I was sitting there feeling sort of anxious. "Do you think she's sick?" I asked.

"Who?" my father said.

"Mother. She's gone to bed and it's only eight o'clock. She said she felt tired."

"She works too hard," he said. "She needs some sort of hobby for her spare time. Everybody needs something aside from their regular work to rest their minds." He got the dictionary out of the bookcase and began to turn the pages and mutter to himself.

At breakfast the next morning I kept watching my mother and asking her how she felt until she finally told me not to ask her any more. "Stop worrying, Helen," she said. "I'm all right!"

"What you need is iron," my father told her, chewing his toast and looking at the morning paper. "You ought to eat raw liver and things like that."

"And milk too," I said. "My hygiene teacher at school said children and old people should have at least a quart a day."

"I'm not old people," said my mother. "Everybody feels sort of dragged out in the spring."

"I don't," my father said. "Spring is the time of year when I feel at my best. I don't see how anybody could help feeling alert and active with nature putting out new buds and everything. A person should be glad to be alive."

He took another piece of toast and chewed it with a crunching sound. "That reminds me," he said. "I must spray the rose bushes right away. Some sort of spider has been eating on nearly every plant."

That afternoon after my music lesson I went around to the hardware store to come home with my father. As we were going down the street to catch the car we passed by a drugstore window full of all kinds of things. "Stop! Stop! Stop!" a big sign said. "Everything in this window greatly reduced. Stock up on all your needs now at this modest price."

My father stopped. He looked in the window with an interested expression. There were some bottles of medicine, rolls of toilet paper, pencil sharpeners, coffee pots, and nearly everything else you could think of.

"Maybe they have what I'm looking for," my father said. "I read somewhere that fish oil soap was good to kill spiders." We went into the drugstore. A little dark man hurried up to wait on us. "Have you got any fish oil soap?" my father asked.

"Fish oil?" the man repeated. "I don't think so. We have some mighty good coconut oil soap though." He showed my father a bar.

My father shook his head. "I don't think that would do. I want to spray some rose bushes with it."

"No, I don't guess you could use it for that," said the clerk. "But it's wonderful for the complexion. We're having a one day special on it. Six bars for only twenty-five cents."

My father looked as if he wanted to go, but didn't know how.

"It's something that you can always use. Why not take home a dozen bars? Or two dozen," the clerk added quickly.

"I guess I might as well," my father said after a while. "It looks like good soap."

"It's the very best," said the man, wrapping it up. "How about some toothpaste or shaving cream?"

"No thank you, I guess not," my father said, beginning to look uncomfortable.

"Or some good hand cream. Buy one jar for twenty-four cents, and you get the other jar for a penny."

"Not today," my father said, picking up things off of the bargain table and putting them down again.

The clerk looked disappointed. He finished tying up the package very slowly, looking around the shelves while he did it.

Suddenly his face brightened up. He hurried over behind the counter and brought out a big bottle.

"Now here's something that ought to be in every

household," he said. "You won't find it in any other drugstore in town. Dr. Ellis's Indian Root Extract. If you need a good tonic to pep you up there's nothing like it. It's made from an old Indian formula. I can personally recommend it. We have it on sale today only."

"I don't think I need any," said my father, moving a little toward the door. "I feel all right."

"Maybe that's because you don't know what it is to be really well," the clerk said, looking serious. "You know how much endurance the American Indian had. They could march all day and dance around the camp fire all night. They knew the secret of the curative properties of nature. That explains their energy."

"Oh yes," my father said.

"Only sixty-nine cents for this regular seventy-cent size bottle. Better stock up on it before the price goes back up."

"Well . . ." My father sounded sort of unwilling.

"How many?" the clerk asked, beginning to stack bottles on the counter. "Most of our customers report good results after using five bottles. Will that be enough?"

"Yes, I think so." My father took out his pocket book and counted out the money very slow.

The clerk handed him the package with a cheerful smile. "Thank you sir," he said. He rushed away to wait on another customer.

While we were waiting for the street car my father kept looking at the big package he had under his arm with a surprised expression.

"I thought you went in there to get some soap to spray

the rose bushes, papa," I told him. "I didn't know you were going to get all those things."

My father spoke sort of cross to me. "Please mind your own business," he said.

So I didn't say anything else, and after a while he said in a kinder voice, "There's no use passing up a bargain when you can get one. We're always running out of toilet soap. And I got the tonic for your mother. She was complaining the other day of feeling tired."

"Oh," I said.

"I must have saved about thirty cents by going in that drugstore," my father said. "That may not sound like much, but over a period of years it would mount up into a good sum." He moved his lips a little. He seemed to be thinking. "Thirty cents a week for ten years would be over a hundred and fifty dollars," he said in a minute. "You see how the pennies mount up into dollars!"

"Yes sir," I said.

The more my father talked the more pleased he looked. By the time we got on the street car he looked happy again.

When my mother saw the twenty-four bars of soap she looked pretty surprised.

"Where did you go, to an auction?" she asked.

"No, a drugstore sale," I told her. "Wait till you see what's in the other package!"

My father handed it to her and she untied the string, looking kind of nervous.

"It's for you to take," I told her. "The Indians used to drink it. It's made out of roots."

"Is it?" my mother said, trying to smile. She took a bottle out and looked at it. "Oh yes," she said.

My father was waiting for her to say something else. She held it up to the light. "It looks very powerful, doesn't it?" she remarked after a while.

My father looked pleased. "It will probably do you a lot of good," he said. "Everybody knows the Indians were a hardy race. I think the last United States census shows about three hundred and thirty-two thousand left, even now. When you think of all their ancestors went through that seems very remarkable."

"It certainly does," said my mother.

"It was partly because they knew all about roots and berries," he said. "They got all the remedies they needed straight from nature. After all nature is the best physician."

He looked very pleased and surprised at himself for saying that, and he said it over again. Then he went out in the yard to look at the rose bushes.

As soon as he was gone my mother stopped smiling and gave a groan. "He ought never to go inside of one of those cut rate places," she said. "He means well, but he hasn't got any more resistance than a rabbit."

She stood there and looked disgusted at the row of bottles. "I wish I'd kept quiet. This is what I get for complaining."

"Why? Don't you want to take it?" I asked. "The drugstore man said it was good."

"It's probably full of something deadly," she said. But I don't want to hurt your father's feelings. I'll take

one bottle—maybe that won't make a corpse out of me—and after this I hope I'll have sense enough to keep my feelings to myself."

So for several days my mother took a tablespoonful of Indian Root Extract after each meal, and before she went to bed. Every time she took it she made an awful face.

"What does it taste like?" I asked her once, watching her take it.

"I can't think of any word horrible enough to describe it," she said after she had drunk a glass of water. "No wonder the Indians looked so grim," she said, sticking the cork back in. "That stuff would take the gaiety out of anybody."

"The Indians were brave, even the babies," I told her. "They could stay strapped to a board all day without crying."

"Anybody that could drink that stuff could stand anything," said my mother.

But the Indian Root Extract must have been pretty good, because in about three days she was through taking it.

"You mean you're cured?" I asked.

"Yes," she said, putting the bottles away in the bathroom cabinet.

That night at the supper table she said to my father, "I had a postcard today from your Cousin Maxine Pressley, and she and her husband are going to pass through Knoxville in June, and they want to stay here a few days."

"Well," my father said in a dreamy voice. "You know, I've been thinking of making a summer house in the back yard. I saw a picture of one today in *Better Gardens* made out of barrel hoops."

"You won't have time for that now," my mother said. "We've got to get the house looking better before your cousin comes."

"It looks all right," said my father. "Maxine's not used to much. She won't care." He took an envelope out of his pocket and began to draw a picture of the summer house he was going to build. "I don't know which would be better, pole beans or morning glories. Morning glories would look pretty, but we could grow all our beans for the table and kill two birds with one stone that way."

"You might as well forget it," my mother said. "Tomorrow I want you to get three gallons of green paint for the kitchen walls and we'll paint them when you come home."

"Paint?" my father said. Suddenly he seemed to realize what she was talking about. "Now there's no use of that, Louise. They're not going to notice the walls."

"The upstairs wall paper looks dingy," my mother said. "You can bring out several cans of wall paper cleaner. We will clean the walls on your first afternoon off."

"I don't know if I'll have any afternoons off any time soon," said my father. "We've been pretty busy at the store." He began to look unhappy. House cleaning made him nervous. "Why don't you just brush them down

with a broom? That would get the worst off."

"Don't try to be funny," my mother said. "The bedroom floors have to be varnished. This time we're going to sandpaper all the old paint off and put on two new coats."

My father sat there a while without saying anything. "It's not that I mind the work," he said after a while. "Because I haven't got a lazy bone in my body. But it seems to me that it would be better to hire a painter to do it. A professional painter could do the work in half the time and turn out a better job too."

"You're a very good painter when you want to be," my mother said. "And you have five weeks to do it in. And you were just saying the other morning how active and alert you feel."

"I don't know. I wouldn't feel right. I'd feel like I was taking away some painter's job. It would make me feel guilty."

"Don't let that bother you," my mother said. "Painters have all they can do this time of year. What we would pay a painter will just about buy all the paint we need. I'll make out the list and you can bring home the things tomorrow, and we'll go straight to work."

After supper my father went out in the yard and walked around. He looked pretty sad. "This is the time of year when a man wants to be out of doors in his free time," he told me. "This is no time to be cooped up in a house. I meant to plant some flower beds out here this spring, but I don't see how I can if I do all that painting. I was thinking of making a summer house over there

in the side yard and planting some morning glory vines to climb over it. It would make a nice cool place to sit on summer evenings. But with all this work your mother has planned out for me, I doubt if I get around to it."

"Well, if you're going to paint in the evenings you could get up early in the mornings, and make a garden and do things like that out of doors," I told him. "And then you would have time to do both."

My father gave me a disgusted look. "I have to sleep sometime," he said. "The human body can just stand so much."

The next night my father came home with several buckets of paint and some brushes and wall paper cleaner and sandpaper. After supper my mother tied up her head and put on an old dress. She seemed to feel very cheerful. "Now we'll move all the kitchen furniture except the stove," she said. "I'll spread some papers on the table and you can stand up on that and paint the ceiling while I do the lower part of the walls."

My father was looking out the back door at the weather. "The grass is awfully dry and there's no rain in sight," he said. "Maybe I ought to water the yard now and start painting later."

"No, there's no sense in putting it off," said my mother, beginning to push the furniture around. "Helen can water the grass if it really needs it."

So my father put on his overalls very slow over his pants, and he began to mix up the paint with an unwill-

ing expression. Every few minutes he would look out the back door. "It's a shame for people to miss the best season of the year shut up in a house," he said. "This is the time of year people should stay out of doors as much as possible and observe nature."

"You can observe it on your way to work in the mornings," said my mother in an absent-minded voice. "I believe we're going to have to do something about the furniture in here too. It's going to look awfully funny against the clean walls."

My father gave a groan and climbed up on the kitchen table. He began to move his brush very slow across the ceiling. Every now and then he would say something under his breath.

My mother began to paint the wall under the sink.

"You won't know this place when we get it finished," she remarked in a cheerful voice. "It will look like an entirely different house."

"We might as well move, then, and save ourselves all this," my father muttered, wiping some green paint off his face, but if she heard him she paid no attention. "You'll be surprised," she said. "Ten gallons of paint and a few weeks' work will make all the difference in the world."

In a few days the kitchen was finished and it looked a lot better, but my father had begun to look terrible. He had paint in his hair and it wouldn't come out, and at meal time he would eat hardly anything.

"Aren't you hungry, papa?" I asked him.

"Everything tastes like turpentine," he said, pushing his plate away.

"Don't be silly; it tastes all right to me. It's just your imagination," my mother told him.

"Maybe it is. Anyway I don't want anything," he said. "I've lost my appetite."

"What's the matter, are you sick?" asked my mother.

"I think I have painter's colic," he said.

"What's that, papa?" I asked him.

"It's a disease you get from breathing paint fumes. It makes you feel terrible."

My mother looked at him with a thoughtful expression. "I know what you need," she said. "You need a tonic. You can take all the rest of that you brought me. There are over four bottles of it left. It will put you on your feet again."

"No," he said. "What I need is rest and outdoor exercise. Medicine won't do me any good."

"Yes it will," said my mother. "Helen, run get a bottle out of the medicine cabinet."

When I came back with the Indian Root Extract my father had left the table and was putting on his painting overalls.

"I don't want that," he said when I held the bottle out to him. "I got it for your mother. That would be a pretty thing for me to do, to take the medicine I got for her."

"I don't need any more of it," my mother said. "Go on and take it. It'll just sit around and go to waste if you don't."

"No," he said, shaking his head. "I wouldn't feel right."

"Don't be silly," my mother said, giving him a spoon. "It tastes pretty bad but of course you have to expect that."

"Don't get the idea that I mind the taste of it," said my father quickly. "Why, when I was a child my grandmother used to give me stuff for a cold that would make a grown man shudder. I took it down without a sound."

My mother kept standing there holding out the bottle to him.

"In those days people had more endurance, even the children," he said. "We didn't expect everything to be easy and pleasant like this generation does."

"This is unpleasant enough for any generation," said my mother.

My father talked a little more about how brave he had been when he was a boy, but my mother kept standing there waiting, so finally he said, "All right then. I might as well try it since you think it's so good."

He took the bottle and poured out a dose very slowly. I stood there and watched him. He gave me an annoyed look. "Helen, didn't you ever see anybody take medicine before?"

"Yes sir," I said.

"Well, what's so all-fired interesting about it? I don't see anything to stare at. Why don't you go do your homework?"

I kept on standing there. He started to say something else, but just then my mother went into the dining room,

and as soon as she was gone he stuck the spoon in his mouth and gave a quick gulp. A surprised expression came on his face.

"Aren't you going to drink some water?" I asked him.
"Mother always did."

He coughed once or twice. "Of course not," he said finally. He made a funny sound in his throat.

"Didn't it taste awful?" I asked.

For a minute he didn't say anything.

Just then my mother came back into the room.

"Why no, I don't think so," he said quickly. "I don't see anything to get excited over." He swallowed hard a few times. "I took worst tasting stuff than that when I was four years old."

He picked up his paint bucket and hurried upstairs.

"Ha, ha," said my mother under her breath when he was gone.

That night my father painted as fast as he could until almost ten o'clock, and he finished nearly the whole bedroom.

The next morning at breakfast he ate two boiled eggs like he always had before he got the painter's colic.

"That's the quickest working medicine I ever saw in my life," he said to my mother. "Why, I feel like a different man."

"That's impossible," my mother said. "One dose couldn't do you all that good. You must take the rest of the bottle at least."

"What's the use?" said my father. "I couldn't feel better. Last night I slept like a log. Why should I take

it when I don't need it? Why don't you give it to one of the children?"

"I feel fine," I said in a hurry. "I don't want any. Do you, Joe?"

"No I don't," said Joe, beginning to look stubborn.

"Give all those extra bottles to the Salvation Army or the Volunteers of America then," my father said. "They must have somebody down there that could use it. There's no use of it sitting around here idle."

"I don't know," said my mother in a doubtful voice. "Maybe we'd better keep it until you see for sure whether you're going to have any more weak spells. There's quite a lot of painting left to do. You wouldn't want to have an attack right in the middle of all that work."

"I'm sure I won't have one," he said. "I think you ought to give it to some worthy charity right away."

"All right then," my mother said. She took an empty plate out into the kitchen, and I went in there too to get the butter.

My mother was standing by the kitchen stove laughing quietly to herself.

"What's funny?" I asked her.

When she saw me watching her face got very serious. She opened the oven door and began to take out the biscuits.

"Nothing," she said.

M U M P S

O

NE AFTERNOON WHEN I

came home from school my mother met me at the front door.

"Helen, you can't come in," she said, looking kind of anxious.

"Why?" I said.

"Because Joey's teacher sent him home today with a temperature and a breaking out on his face. I don't want you to be exposed to it. It might be something serious."

"How long do I have to stay out?" I asked her. I felt sort of funny.

"Until we find out for sure what it is he's got," she told me. "Your Cousin Josephine is coming by in a few minutes, and I've got your things packed. She said you could stay with her a few days so you can keep on going to school. That way you won't get behind like you would if you stayed here and got quarantined."

"You mean I have to take my clothes?"

"Yes, of course," my mother said.

"You mean I have to go there to live?"

"Just for a little while," she said. "Pretty soon Joe will

be well, then you can come back. It's for your own good."

"I don't much want to go," I said. "I wouldn't get behind. I don't much want to stay with Cousin Josephine."

"Well, you have to anyway," my mother said. "Your Aunt Bessie and Uncle Lester are out of town, and the other relatives haven't got room for you. It won't be for long."

I sat down in the porch swing. I wish I didn't have to go, I was thinking. I would rather stay with almost anybody but her. She wasn't very kin to us, and she was about thirty-five years old, and she worked in an office downtown. I had only seen her a few times. She didn't much like children.

I could stay here and help take care of Joe, I thought to myself. I could tell him stories and things and give him medicine. I wouldn't care if I took whatever it is he's got.

My mother had gone back in the house to tend to Joe, and after I had sat there a while Cousin Josephine drove up in her car. She honked the horn and I got the bag with my clothes in it off the swing and I started to go out there. My mother came out to say goodbye. "Remember," she said. "You must do whatever Cousin Josephine says, and we'll call you up every night."

"Goodbye," I said.

Cousin Josephine was sitting there in the car holding a handkerchief over her mouth so she wouldn't catch any germs. My mother stood a little piece away and watched me get in.

"I don't think there's any danger, Josephine," she said. "It's probably only chicken pox."

"You can't tell," Cousin Josephine said, talking through the handkerchief. "Helen hasn't been near him, has she?"

"No," my mother told her.

"It's better to be on the safe side," said Cousin Josephine. "Let me know what develops."

She started the car with a jerk and drove away pretty fast.

When we had gone about two blocks she took down the handkerchief and drove with both hands. I was thinking I ought to be polite and say something to Cousin Josephine, but I couldn't think of anything to say. Besides, I was feeling sort of funny to be going away from home.

After we had ridden a while Cousin Josephine said, "Helen, before I forget it, I want to remind you to be as quiet as possible while you are staying with me. I come home at night tired, and I simply can't stand a lot of noise. And there's a Miss Bates renting the extra room in the apartment now. She's only been there a week, but she seems to be a nice girl, and I don't think she'll mind having you there, only you must be very quiet and stay in the background as much as possible."

"I will," I told Cousin Josephine.

"Miss Bates works in a bookstore in the daytime, and she writes books at night, and the least little noise distracts her attention, so try hard not to do anything to annoy her."

"I will," I said again.

"There's a child in the apartment right over us that keeps running up and down and banging its toys on the

floor," said Cousin Josephine, looking sad. "Its mother doesn't seem to be able to do a thing with it."

I tried to think of something to say, but I couldn't so we went the rest of the way without saying anything. And pretty soon we were there and Cousin Josephine drove her car into the garage, and we went up to her apartment.

"Well, here we are," Cousin Josephine said, unlocking the door. She smiled at me a little, being polite.

"Yes," I said. I almost whispered it so it wouldn't disturb Miss Bates. But when we went inside she wasn't there yet. Cousin Josephine pulled up the window shades to let in some light. She told me where to put my things. Then she went into the kitchen. I stood by the window and looked out to see what was there and to wait till she would tell me what to do next. It seemed sort of lonely. I began to think about Joe. Maybe it's something dangerous he's got, I thought. I wish now I had treated him better. Maybe it's not chicken pox.

While I was standing there the door opened and a lady came in. I thought it must be Miss Bates. She was plump and medium young, and when she saw me she looked surprised.

Cousin Josephine came to the kitchen door. "Miss Bates, this is my Cousin Louise's little girl, Helen. She's going to stay here a few days while her little brother is sick."

"Oh, what a lovely surprise," said Miss Bates, blinking her eyes and smiling wide at me. "How old are you, Helen?"

"Nine," I said.

"What a nice age to be. That's my favorite age," said Miss Bates. "If the wishing fairy told me I could be any age I wanted to, I think I would choose to be exactly nine!"

"Miss Bates is writing a book for children," Cousin Josephine explained.

All of a sudden Miss Bates clapped her hands. "Oh, I just had the loveliest idea!" she said. "Maybe while she's here Helen would listen to me read the book. It would be very helpful to me to get a child's reaction."

"Of course she would. She'd be glad to, wouldn't you, Helen?" Cousin Josephine asked.

"Yes," I said.

"You never can tell until you've got a child's reaction," Miss Bates told Cousin Josephine. "Last summer when I started this book I was at my sister's summer cabin up at Elkmont and I read the first few chapters to a little boy next door that was just getting over typhoid, and I remember when I got to the point where Panky the elephant is on a desert island surrounded by hungry Weejies, Sonny got so excited that I had to stop reading because it might run up his fever."

I forgot that I was supposed to be quiet. "Is that a dangerous disease?" I asked Miss Bates.

"Yes, it is," Miss Bates said. "He certainly was an appreciative audience."

"Do people die with it?" I asked.

"Yes, indeed," she said. "I've promised Sonny the first copy of the book and the dedication is going to read, For

Little Sonny, with love from Panky and all the animals of Joy Town."

Maybe that's what he's got, I thought. I began to feel awful. Maybe Joe won't get well of whatever it is.

"I'm sure Helen will enjoy it just as much," Cousin Josephine was saying. "You don't get to hear a real live author read her own book every day."

Miss Bates laughed a little. "Oh well, it won't set the world on fire," she said. "But I do think it will be read by boys and girls, and it has some little truth in it even for grown ups. After you've had your dinner, Helen, we'll make ourselves comfy in here on the couch and take a trip to Joy Town."

"All right," I said, but to myself I was thinking, I wish I was at home. I wish I was going to eat supper in my own house instead of here. I wouldn't care if I had to wash the dishes afterward. I wish Joe wasn't sick and I would never try to make him do anything again that he didn't want to do.

Cousin Josephine cooked our supper in the kitchenette, and Miss Bates cooked hers, and we all ate in there on a little table. It was ham and peas and pineapple salad and banana pudding for dessert. But it all tasted just the same. I ate what was on my plate so it wouldn't be wasted. I didn't say anything while I was eating because I was trying to stay in the background like Cousin Josephine had said, and besides I didn't know anything to talk about.

I partly listened to Cousin Josephine and Miss Bates. Cousin Josephine was telling Miss Bates about Joe.

"You never can tell about these children's diseases," she said. "They make me very nervous. My cousin called up and asked if the child could stay here, and of course I couldn't say no, but you always take a risk when you expose yourself like that."

"That's true," Miss Bates said. "But it's my firm belief that a person is safe from anything that he wills himself to be safe from. I'm a great believer in Happiness. It's my religion. I made a little prayer for myself a long time ago, and I say it aloud every morning just before I jump out of bed. It goes something like this: 'Today I will stay free from the evils and ills of the world. Today I will be happy and well.' And believe it or not, it works."

"It's a beautiful thought," Cousin Josephine said.

"I've never had a sick day," Miss Bates said. "It's all in your attitude."

"That's a very interesting philosophy," said Cousin Josephine.

"I've built my life on it. When I look around me and see all the sorrow and sickness in the world I wonder why when it's so unnecessary."

Just then we finished eating and Miss Bates went to her room to get the book and I went in the living room and sat down on a chair. She came in with a lot of paper with some typewriting on it, and she sat down too. She smiled at me.

"Take a long breath," she said, reading off of the paper. "Hold tight to the magic carpet, and in a twink you will be whisked away to Joy Town the home of Panky the Happy Elephant."

I didn't know if she really meant for me to do that or

not, but Cousin Josephine was watching and I had promised my mother to do what I was supposed to, so I did what it said no matter how silly it was.

"You will meet Panky, a bold adventurer and you will hear the tunes he made up to cheer himself when it rained, and you will make friends with Twinkletoes who never frowned and always had a birthday party on Fridays. Are you ready? Whisk. We are there. And now for the story!"

I opened my eyes and I tried to listen. Miss Bates read pretty fast, and anyway it was hard to understand. Every once in a while she would stop reading and say *Tune*, and then she would sing a little song. It seemed sort of queer. I had never heard of a book like that.

There was a bear in the book called *Gruffy*, and Miss Bates would growl what he said and bump on the floor with her feet. She read so loud and fast that I could hardly understand a word she said.

I kept sitting there wondering if Joe had a dangerous disease or not, and I thought what I would be doing if I was at home. I would be working arithmetic, I guess, I thought, but even that would be better than this.

Every once in a while Miss Bates would give a giggle, and then Cousin Josephine would, and so would I to be polite, but I didn't really think there was anything funny.

So the time kept going by and both my feet went to sleep and the words began to sound dimmer, and I kept thinking to myself that pretty soon the night would be over and it would be time to go to school, and still I hadn't gone to bed.

But all of a sudden Miss Bates stopped reading and

started putting her papers together. "And that's all till tomorrow night," she said to me.

"Miss Bates, it's as clever as can be," Cousin Josephine said, getting up. "It's every bit as good as a lot of books you see printed."

Miss Bates looked very pleased. "Do you really think so?" she said. "I hope you aren't just being nice."

"I mean it," Cousin Josephine said. "There's not a child living that wouldn't love it."

"Of course it won't set the world on fire," Miss Bates said.

"It's really good," said Cousin Josephine.

"Of course there's a lot of fun in it," Miss Bates said. "But down underneath is the little philosophy that the bright side is the only real side. The ills of the world are like the ugly creatures Panky saw in the enchanted wood. They weren't real at all, and when he laughed they all disappeared. I hope the kiddies will get that. I hope the truth of it will penetrate their little minds as well as the humor."

"Oh, they'll love it," Cousin Josephine said.

Miss Bates looked pleased. She patted me on the head. "You're certainly a good little audience," she told me. "Tomorrow we'll start on chapter four."

"How many chapters are in the book?" I asked Miss Bates. I was supposed to be quiet, but I didn't think it would hurt to ask her that.

"So far there are eighteen," Miss Bates said. "But I may be able to write several more tonight. You see, I do my work while other folks sleep," she said, smiling at me.

"Sometimes my typewriter goes until nearly dawn."

I tried to think how long it would take to listen to that many chapters but I couldn't remember how to figure it out. I got down on my feet and they felt very funny. I tried to walk around on them and I could hardly stand up.

"You better go to bed now, Helen," Cousin Josephine said. "I'm going to let you sleep in here on the couch by the window."

"You can look right out and see the stars," Miss Bates said. "I must teach you my little goodnight thought while you are here."

She went out and Cousin Josephine opened out the couch and put some blankets on it. Then she went to her own bedroom and shut the door. I put on my pajamas in a hurry and I got in under the blankets. I looked out the window but I didn't see any stars. All I could see were the tops of the trees bending around in the wind. When I looked around the room in the dark the furniture seemed to be in the wrong places. I could hear Miss Bates' typewriter pecking very fast in the next room.

I started thinking about home and wishing I was there. I thought how awful it would be to stay here for two or three weeks. I began to feel sorry for Joe. I wish I had been better to him, I thought. I wish I hadn't told on him that time.

I began to think of what I could do to get home. I could run away but that wouldn't be polite and besides my mother would make me come right back again.

I couldn't think of anything and I couldn't go to sleep because of the pecking. All of a sudden I remembered one

time when I was in the third grade when I had kept from staying in after school by praying, and once I had found a library book that was lost that way. Maybe it will do some good, I thought.

I got out of bed and prayed about five minutes, and then I got back in and prayed a while longer. I prayed that I wouldn't have to stay here any more and that Joe didn't have anything dangerous. Then I felt a little better. Maybe it will do some good, I thought. Anyway, I didn't know anything else to do.

The next morning Cousin Josephine took me to school in her car before she went to work. Miss Bates had not got up yet. I was glad of that because she might want to start reading aloud again.

Maybe I will be home tonight, I thought.

All day I kept hoping that whatever was going to happen would do it before school was out so I could go back to my own house from school instead of going back to Cousin Josephine's apartment, but by two-thirty nothing had, so I had to get on the street car like Cousin Josephine had told me to, and meet her in town.

"Well, I called your mother," she told me when we started back to her house that afternoon in her car. "It looks like it never rains but it pours. Joe has the German Measles, and not only that, but he has the mumps too in one side. He is certainly doing it up right."

"Is it dangerous?" I asked her.

"No, not unless something else develops."

I felt a little better. "How long will it take?"

"About three weeks if he doesn't get mumps in the other side," she said. "And he probably will."

I felt worse again. Maybe it was because I prayed partly in bed, I thought. Maybe God didn't like that. Tonight I'll stay out the whole time no matter how hard the floor is. No matter how cold it is, it would be better to stay on it a whole hour than to have to stay at Cousin Josephine's for three weeks.

That night just before supper my mother called me on the telephone. She said Joe was doing pretty well. I asked her when I could come home.

"Not for a good while yet," she said. "Are you behaving yourself?"

"Yes," I told her.

"That's good."

"There's a lady here named Miss Bates that reads to me," I told her.

"That's nice," my mother said.

"She sings too," I told my mother. "She's going to sing and read a whole book out loud. I wish I could come home."

But my mother didn't seem to understand how much I wanted to, because she said a few things more, then she hung up.

Then it seemed lonelier than ever. I went in the kitchen and Cousin Josephine and I ate supper. While we were eating it, Miss Bates came in. She seemed to feel very cheerful. While she cooked her supper she kept sing-

ing little songs that she had made up and before she started eating she said a little poem called Thought before Meat.

"Well, I guess we'll have Helen here for some time yet," Cousin Josephine said when Miss Bates was quiet for a minute. She looked at me like she thought it was my fault. "Her little brother turned out to have measles and mumps both."

"Really?" Miss Bates said. "But don't you think there might be a mistake? So often people magnify their ills, don't you think? So much of it is in your imagination."

"Yes," Cousin Josephine said. "But still I think there are some things like measles that you don't have any control over."

"I don't know," Miss Bates said, smiling a little at Cousin Josephine. "In my own experience I've found that if a thought of illness comes into my mind I can put a happy thought in its place and get rid of it. And I've never had even a headache or a cold."

"That's a wonderful record," Cousin Josephine said. But she looked at Miss Bates as if she thought there was something wrong with her.

"Oh, I know it sounds crazy," Miss Bates said laughing. "But that's because it's so simple. It's hard to believe that anything as simple as that would really work."

"Maybe so," Cousin Josephine said. She kept looking funny at Miss Bates.

As soon as Miss Bates finished her supper we went into the living room and she brought out the book again and began reading on chapter four.

This time Cousin Josephine said she had some work to do, so she went into her bedroom to do it. So Miss Bates read to me by myself. It was like the night before only it was worse because there were a lot of new characters in it with names like Loo and Boozy and Cluck, and I couldn't remember which was which, and that made it very mixed up. Besides, I was still sleepy from the night before and every few minutes I would give a yawn and Miss Bates would look at me quick to see if I was listening. And I would try to keep from going to sleep but every once in a while her voice would start to get dim and I would almost slide on the floor.

It seemed even longer than the night before. It seemed as if it would never end, but finally Miss Bates got to chapter seven, and she started putting the papers together.

She smiled at me. "Tomorrow night I'll have a little surprise for you, Helen," she said. "It's about Panky's best Sunday-go-to-meeting tail. Something happened to it, and you'd never guess what! I can't tell you any more now, it's a secret, but you'll see."

Then she said goodnight and closed her door. Pretty soon the typewriter started pecking.

I felt awful. I can't stand to stay here any more, I thought, I've got to go home.

As quick as I could I got ready for bed and turned out the light. Then I began to pray. I prayed the longest I had yet. I guess I prayed about an hour.

After a while I stopped and went to bed. This time it ought to do some good, I thought. I stayed out the whole

time. God ought to make something happen, I kept thinking while I listened to Miss Bates' typewriter. It wouldn't be much trouble, and I don't know anything to do myself. If he does do something, I'm going to put all my next week's lunch money in the collection at Sunday School. Maybe I'll save myself out a nickel, but I'll put the rest in. That ought to do some good.

But for a while the next day it looked like I had just wasted my time. Nothing happened. Cousin Josephine took me to school and all day, just like the day before, I kept thinking that my mother would call me and tell me that it was all right to come home now. But she didn't.

I began to feel sort of disgusted. I wish now I'd gone on to bed, I thought. I might as well have.

"Cousin Josephine," I asked when we were riding along that afternoon. "Do you believe it's any use to pray for things?"

"That depends on what kind of things they are," Cousin Josephine said.

"I don't think it's any use," I told her.

She looked shocked. "You ~~ought~~ not to say that."

Well, I don't, I thought.

When we got to the apartment I was standing by the window feeling disgusted, and while I was standing there Miss Bates came in.

"Hello, Helen," she said. But she didn't sound very cheerful. She didn't say anything about the book. She



I thought so

went to her room and put down her things. Then she went in the kitchen where Cousin Josephine was. She started looking at the food.

"It's the funniest thing!" she said to Cousin Josephine. "I don't believe I want a thing tonight for some reason. I just don't feel the least bit interested in food."

"Is that so?" Cousin Josephine said. She called me to come in and eat supper. Miss Bates kept putting things on top of the refrigerator and looking at them. "For some reason I haven't felt the slightest bit interested in food all day," she said, "and that's unusual for me."

All of a sudden Miss Bates turned around so you could see her face. It looked funny. It looked like the toothache low down on both sides. I forgot to be quiet. I forgot to stay in the background like I had been doing.

"Look, Miss Bates," I told her loud. "Look in the mirror how your face looks!"

Miss Bates went over to the kitchen mirror and looked. Then she gave a kind of a scream. "Oh, but that's impossible," she said.

Cousin Josephine looked disgusted at me, like I was the one to blame.

"I knew it," she said. "I knew it was a risky thing bringing this child here all along, but what else could I do?"

"I don't believe it," Miss Bates said, turning around and looking at us. She didn't look cheerful any more. She looked almost mad. "I simply won't believe it," she said.

"Come on, Helen," Cousin Josephine said, throwing

down her napkin. "Get your things and I'll take you home. You might as well be quarantined there as here."

The next day when the doctor came to see Joe my mother told him why I had come back. Dr. Stevens told her not to feel bad because it couldn't be Joey's mumps that Miss Bates had, but some that she had got somewhere else. He said they were all over town.

So then I knew that it wasn't praying that had caused it. It was just an accident. I was standing there wondering whether I should put my lunch money in the collection plate like I had promised, but before I had made up my mind Dr. Stevens gave me a hard look and said, "Come here, Helen."

He looked down my throat and stuck the thermometer in my mouth.

"I thought so," he said.

My mother gave a low groan. "Which one has she got?" she asked him.

"Both," Dr. Stevens said with a cheerful smile.

JOEY BLOWS THE TRUMPET

I

HAD TO STAY FOR THE P.T.A.

meeting at school one afternoon because my class was going to sing for it, and after the meeting was over I was waiting for my mother while she talked to Miss Morris, Joey's teacher.

"Joe has done pretty well this year," Miss Morris was telling my mother. "I think the chief trouble with Joe is that he just hasn't found himself." My mother looked a little worried. "What do you think we ought to do with him?" she asked Miss Morris.

"Well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Marsden," Miss Morris said. "I was just thinking that it would be a wonderful thing for Joe if you could enter him in this demonstration class they have every summer out at the University. It doesn't cost anything, and they run it for the benefit of the students that are taking Education. So of course they use the most modern methods with the children. I think it would help Joe. They'd find some means of self-expression for him, and I think that's what Joe really needs."

"I must see what I can do about it," my mother said.

So she called up the University the next day and gave them Joe's name to put on the list, and in a few weeks she got a letter from the University saying that Joe could come.

So the first day of summer school my mother took him out to the University, and she took me too, so I could stay there and bring him back home, because she had to go back and do the house-work.

The University was a lot of red brick buildings on a high hill, and the demonstration school was in a big room in the basement of one of the buildings. When we went in there a lot of children were running around the room, and a few of them were hammering on some boards in a corner. There was a lady in a smock and with some glasses pinched on her nose, and her hair cut short. She was mixing up some clay, but when she saw us she came hurrying over there smiling as she came.

She told my mother that she was Miss Ridings, the teacher of the class. "And you have two nice children for me," she said, looking kind at us.

"No, Joey is the one that's going to join the class," my mother said. "But I wondered if it would be all right for Helen to come with him every morning and wait somewhere till the class is over so she can bring him home."

"Oh yes," said Miss Ridings. "Yes indeed. She can sit right over here where the teachers will be who are observing the children. She can bring a book if she likes or something to keep her busy."

Miss Ridings waved her hand toward the children. "You see we aren't organized yet," she said. "The sum-

mer school students are registering today, so our work really begins tomorrow. Joe, don't you want to go join that group over there by the window? They are talking over the things they want to do this summer. Maybe you could help them with their plans."

Joe shook his head and looked down at the floor. He moved his feet around a little.

My mother made motions to Miss Ridings over Joey's head.

"Joe, I wonder if you'd go bring me the scissors off that table in the corner?" Miss Ridings asked him in a bright sounding voice.

Joe kept on standing still a minute, then he started going very slow. As soon as he got to where he couldn't hear, my mother said to Miss Ridings, "Joey is a very shy child, especially with strangers, and his school teacher thought maybe you could give him some individual attention or do something that would help him to overcome it."

She went on telling how Joe was.

Miss Ridings kept nodding her head. "I can see that he's a very introverted type," she said thoughtfully. "I'm glad you brought him, Mrs. Marsden. He will make an excellent study for these young teachers who observe our work. We've worked wonders with ingrown personalities in past summers. Last year, for instance, we had a little girl that spent the first four weeks of the session under a table. We could get absolutely no response from her. Then suddenly one morning of her own accord she joined a group at the sand box. She made a clay horse

that the other children admired, and after that you couldn't have found a happier, more co-operative child anywhere. What we will try to do for Joe is to discover the thing he can do best to contribute to the group. That will give him a sense of usefulness and restore his self-confidence."

My mother looked a lot more cheerful. "I hope so," she said. Just then Joe came back bringing the scissors. He stuck them out at Miss Ridings without looking at her.

"Thank you so much, Joe," Miss Ridings said. "It's better not to gush over a shy child," she said under her breath to my mother. "I find that a matter-of-fact attitude is the best one to take."

"Oh yes," said my mother. Then she told Miss Ridings that since the class didn't start until tomorrow we would go on home, and after this I could bring Joe myself.

"Do you think it will be fun to go to that school, Joey?" I asked him on the street car.

He had his face up close to the window looking out.

"I don't know," he said finally.

"I think it will. It's different from a real school. You'll get to hammer and make horses out of clay and things like that and when you get through maybe you'll be cured."

I hadn't meant to say that. I looked around in a hurry to see if my mother had heard, but she didn't seem to have. And Joey was looking out the window again, pay-

ing no attention. I was glad he wasn't because if he knew what they were going to try to do he might be stubborn and not let them do it.

The next morning when Joe and I got to the school-room most of the children were already there and the chairs at the back of the room were full of teachers with notebooks and fountain pens in their hands.

"Joe, I have to sit back here," I said. "You go on over there where Miss Ridings is."

Joe kept standing there with his head hanging down. He didn't move. "Go on," I told him, giving him a little shove.

But just then Miss Ridings saw us and she came over to where we were. "Good morning, children," she said. "Joe, the boys and girls over in that corner are building an Eskimo village. Would you like to help them?"

Joe didn't say whether he would or not. He began to scrape his feet around. "They would be glad to have you in their group," said Miss Ridings. "They really need you. Would you like to be the one who sprinkles snow on the landscape?"

Joey shook his head. "All right, Joe," Miss Ridings told him in a kind voice. "You can sit and watch today. Maybe tomorrow you would like to join them."

She put a chair by the table, and finally Joe sat down in it. Miss Ridings laid a lump of clay on the table close to him. "Maybe if you get tired of watching you would like to make an igloo," she said.

Joe sat there and stared at the children and paid no attention to the clay. Miss Ridings looked down at him a minute, then she came over to where the teachers were.

"This child that just came in is a beautiful example of an isolated personality," she said in a low voice. "His feeling of inferiority makes him afraid to join the group. Our problem is to give him some means of expression by which he can get the other children's approval. You'll notice we don't urge this child to do anything he doesn't want to do. That would be fatal. We merely make suggestions in an offhand way and leave the material within easy reach. This child seems to be very ingrown, so he may not respond to the clay. If he doesn't we will keep on trying something else until we find something that he will react favorably to."

The teachers were all writing very fast in their notebooks. When they finished writing they began to stare very interested at Joe to see what he was going to do. Two or three times he must have felt their eyes looking at him, because he turned his head and gave them a few glares.

When the morning was over the children had almost finished building the Eskimo village, but Joe still hadn't made an igloo. All he had done was just sit.

"Joe, why didn't you make something out of that clay?" I asked him on the way home. "Why don't you do things like the other children?"

"Because I don't want to," he said.

"You'd have a better time if you would sprinkle snow or do something like that. What fun is it just to sit there?"

But he didn't say anything. He was looking along the sidewalk for cold drink bottle caps to put in his collection.

The next morning when Miss Ridings asked Joe if he wanted to help the children he acted the same way he had done the day before. But Miss Ridings didn't get mad like some teachers would. She sat him in the chair again, and this time she put some paper and big crayons on the table. "Joe, I think it would be lovely to have a picture of an Eskimo fishing through a hole in the ice to hang up in our room," she said. "Maybe you will feel like making one sometime during the morning. It would be something we could all enjoy."

Then she went away and left him. She came over to where I was sitting. "What does your little brother do at home in his leisure time?" she asked me, talking low so Joe couldn't hear her. "What is he interested in?"

"He collects bottle tops," I told her. "He has three cigar boxes full."

The teachers stopped looking at Joe and listened to me instead, with very interested expressions.

"He digs in the yard too," I said.

"You mean he makes a garden?" Miss Ridings asked.

"No," I told her. "He digs holes then fills them up again."

Miss Ridings looked very pleased and kept nodding her head. "Definitely unsocialized behavior, you see," she said to the teachers. "It will probably take some time to socialize him. Tomorrow Miss Fain from the

Tennessee Teachers College is coming in for a day or two. It will be most interesting to see what she does with him."

Miss Ridings left the teachers and hurried over to where two little boys were fighting over a hammer. "Charles, you may kick Alvin just as hard as he kicked you," she said in a calm voice. "He must know how it feels to be kicked in the stomach."

The teachers looked at each other very pleased. "Miss Ridings is marvelous," the one next to me said to another one. "She's always equal to the occasion."

"Yes," said the other one, "but wait till you see Miss Fain. She's even more marvelous. Why, when I took courses under her at Teachers College I saw her work simply wonders with children everybody else had given up as hopeless. I don't know what she'll do with that little boy, but I'm sure it will be something surprising."

That day Joe didn't draw a picture of an Eskimo. He didn't do anything. I don't believe Miss Ridings is going to cure him, I thought to myself. This makes two days that he hasn't done what he was supposed to. Unless Miss Fain can change him like that teacher said we might as well stay at home. If all Joe is going to do is sit there.

Miss Fain turned out to be a tall lady with white hair. But she didn't seem to be very old. Wednesday when she came Miss Ridings had already put Joe at the table with a pencil and some paper. "We're going to have a program next week, Joe," she had told him. "If you'd

like to write a little story or poem to read at it we would be so glad. Maybe you could pretend you were a seal and write about your adventures on the ice."

Joe sat there, not writing a story.

Miss Fain stopped where the teachers were sitting and she began to talk to some that she knew, and Miss Ridings saw her and came hurrying over there. She told Miss Fain how delighted they were to have her, and then she explained what the children were doing.

"The six and seven year olds are working on Our Little Friends of Other Lands, and the eight year olds are working on Community Life."

Miss Fain smiled and looked over at the children very kind. "And what is that little boy working on?" she asked, nodding her head toward Joe.

"He is going through a period of adjustment just now," said Miss Ridings. "We are all interested in seeing what you can do with the child."

Miss Fain thought a minute, then she said, "I plan to start a toy orchestra with some of your younger children, Miss Ridings. We will let this little boy play an instrument in it. I have had some amazing results from children of the solitary type when they were given a chance to be a member of a musical group."

"That sounds as if it might work," Miss Ridings said, looking happy. "Music may be the very thing he needs to free himself."

The teachers looked pleased and interested and began whispering to each other.

I looked at Joey. He didn't seem to know they were

talking about him. He was chewing on a piece of paper Miss Ridings had given him and watching the children who were building the grocery store.

Miss Fain brought a big box full of things to the school room the next day. She unpacked them on the table where Joey was sitting. There was a drum and some whistles, and a lot of other things. Miss Ridings went to the piano and played the piece that meant for the six and seven year old children to stop working and come to the circle of chairs. They had been making totem poles out of sticks, and they put them down and came over to where Miss Fain was.

When they had all sat down and got still Miss Fain told them what they were going to do. She explained what an orchestra was and that each of them would have something to play on. She said that in an orchestra it was very important to do your part, because just one person that didn't co-operate would ruin the whole thing.

All of the children started talking at once telling which instrument they wanted to play on. Joe was sitting there staring at the things, but not saying anything.

Miss Fain held up her hand for them to hush. "Children," she said. "I'm glad you're so enthusiastic. But this time I think I'll have to choose the instrument for you to play. Remember that each person is equally important. The little boy that blows the whistle will have just as important a part as the one that clashes the cymbals. We mustn't have any feelings of jealousy or envy, or the spirit of our little orchestra will be ruined."

She started giving each of the children one of the things on the table. Some of them gave awful frowns and said they wanted something else, but Miss Fain reminded them again that they must co-operate, and most of them stopped grumbling, but some of them kept on frowning. When she got to Joe she said, "Joe, I'm going to let you play the toy trumpet. You look like the very boy to play it. It takes lots of wind." She held the trumpet out to Joe, and at first he just looked at it, but finally when she kept on holding it out to him, he took it.

The teachers looked surprised; some of them began to unscrew their fountain pens. "You see?" the one next to me said to another one. "I told you Miss Fain could do it. She's wonderful."

After all the children had something to play on Miss Fain told them that the first piece they would learn to play was called "In the Alps."

"You know in Switzerland every spring the villagers take the cows up on the slopes to the green pastures," she said. "This little piece tells about the procession. First Miss Ridings will play a little folk dance on the piano, then this little boy will clash the cymbals to show the procession is starting, then the little girl with the bells will jingle them, and so on. I'll tell you each what to do the first time. Then at the very end Joe will play three loud notes on the trumpet and three soft ones for an echo. Joe's part is very important indeed. Those notes must come in exactly the right place."

Joe stared at Miss Fain. He looked a little stubborn, but he looked more something else. I had never seen that

expression on his face. Maybe he will blow it after all, I thought. Maybe Miss Fain can get him to, like everybody thinks she can.

Miss Ridings played on the piano for a minute or two, then Miss Fain told the little boy to hit the cymbals together. Then Miss Ridings played some more and the little girl rang the bells, then another child beat two sticks together, and finally it was time for Joey to blow the trumpet.

Miss Fain took the trumpet from Joe to show him how. She pressed one thing down and blew, then a different one and blew again. It was a low note, then a high

toot

one, then a low one. Toot toot, it went. Then she blew them again, softer.

Joe stared at her. He had that funny expression on his face.

"Now, Joe, you try," Miss Fain said. She wiped off the mouthpiece and gave Joe the trumpet. All the teachers sat very still. They looked like they were holding their breaths.

Then Joey took the trumpet. Nobody moved. He held it in his hands a minute, then all of a sudden he put it to his mouth and blew on it. Toot, toot, toot, it went, all the same note.

I felt like fainting. The teachers looked shocked a minute, then they grabbed their fountain pens and began to write as fast as they could.

"Very good, Joe," said Miss Fain. "Only next time do

it like this." She took the trumpet from him and blew it right.

"Now you can go back to your work," she told the children. "Tomorrow we will practice again, and the last day of the term maybe we will play for your parents."

All the children put their instruments down and went back to working on the totem poles. But Joe kept sitting where he had sat for the last three days. He kept on holding the trumpet, and in a minute he blew it again. This time he got it right.

The teacher next to me kept saying under her breath, "I never saw anything like it. Miss Fain is simply a genius."

Miss Ridings left the piano and came over to the teachers. She had a big smile on her face. "I knew Miss Fain could do it, but I didn't know she could do it so quickly," she said. "Did you ever see such a change in anybody? He's a different child already."

Joey was tooting again. This time he got it wrong, and all the notes were high, and they hurt your ears. Then he blew them low. His face got red from so much blowing.

"Very good, Joe," said Miss Fain. "But I think you'd better stop now. Maybe you'd like to make a totem pole."

Joey shook his head. He began to blow again. It was terrible. With the other children hammering and Joey blowing, it made your head ache.

Miss Fain looked at Joe a minute, then she came over to Miss Ridings. "I hate to stop him," she said in a low

voice. "It might undo all that we've done."

"Oh, no." Miss Ridings looked shocked. "He mustn't be thwarted. That would kill all the creative impulse in him."

So the rest of the morning Joey blew the three notes over and over. Sometimes he blew all high ones, and sometimes all low ones, and sometimes he mixed them up. By the time noon came and the children got ready to go home the sweat was running down Joe's face and it was as red as it could be.

As soon as I got home I hurried in to tell my mother what Joey had done that day.

She looked very pleased and surprised.

"That's wonderful," she said. "I wish we'd known about this school last summer. Maybe Miss Morris was right. Maybe they know what it is Joey needs."

Joe could hardly wait to get to school the next morning. He was ready before I was, and when we got off the street car he didn't drag his feet along and poke like he usually did; he almost ran up the hill. As soon as we got in the room he hurried over to the table and snatched the trumpet and began to toot on it. He puffed out his jaws and blew so loud it seemed like even the chairs shook.

At first Miss Ridings looked over at the teachers and smiled in a pleased way, but after about fifteen minutes she went over to Joe and told him that maybe he had played enough and it would be nice if he did something

else for a while. She almost had to yell above the noise he was making.

But it didn't do any good. Joe kept on blowing. His eyes stuck out and he looked sort of dangerous. "That child is going to injure himself," one of the teachers said, looking nervous.

When Miss Fain came Miss Ridings took her over to one side and talked to her, and they both looked at Joe. Miss Fain shook her head at Miss Ridings; I guess she was saying to let him keep on expressing himself.

The more Joe blew the louder everybody had to talk to hear each other. When Miss Ridings started playing the piano at ten o'clock the children didn't come for a long time because they couldn't hear it above the trumpet.

But finally Miss Fain got them all sitting around the table. Some of them had their fingers stuck in their ears.

"Children . . ." Miss Fain kept saying, but that was all you could hear. You could tell she was talking because her lips were moving, but you couldn't tell what she was saying.

Finally she went over to Joe and said something in his ear. He kept on blowing for a minute. Then when she kept talking he took the trumpet out of his mouth.

The teachers sat back in their seats; the children took their fingers out of their ears, but they kept looking at Joey to see if he had stopped for good. Miss Fain let out a long breath. "Now!" she said. "Miss Ridings will play the piano and we will all practice together."

Miss Ridings played the dance, then the child that had the bells jingled them at the right time. Joe kept sitting with the trumpet in his mouth, but not blowing it. He gave one toot by accident half way through the piece, and Miss Fain shook her head at him. "Not yet," she said.

Joe waited till his time came, then he blew the notes so loud I guess you could hear them all over the University. He started to do it all over again, but Miss Fain said, "Remember what I told you, Joe," and he didn't.

After the orchestra had finished practicing it was time to go home, and when Joe came over to where I was he brought the trumpet with him.

"Go put it back, Joe," I said. "It's just for you to use here. You're not supposed to take it home with you."

But Joe held onto it. "Yes I am," he said, starting toward the door. "She said I could."

"Who did?" I asked.

He pointed to Miss Fain. I went over to where she was sitting, writing at the desk, and I asked her if she wanted Joe to take the trumpet home.

"Yes," she said. "I thought it might encourage him. You see, now that we have his interest aroused we don't want to do anything to balk it. He can play the trumpet at home as much as he likes, then he can bring it back to school tomorrow."

She smiled at me and went back to writing.

I hurried to catch up with Joe; he was almost to the bottom of the hill. When we got on the street car all the seats were occupied and Joe sat down by an old lady and I

sat behind him. The old lady smiled kind at Joe and started asking him questions about the trumpet, if he could play it, but he just stared at her without answering. After a while he put it in his mouth and gave a loud toot. The old lady gave a jump and said, "Oh!" A man across the aisle was reading a paper and he looked at Joey and frowned. But Joe blew again a little louder, and then some more louder still. The motorman turned around several times and gave him a mad look, and so did most of the passengers. The man across the aisle gave him several more glares and finally he said, "Listen, buddy, do you have to do that?"

But Joe either didn't hear him or he didn't care, because he didn't stop, and finally the man folded up his paper and put it in his pocket and sat there looking at Joey and muttering to himself.

The lady sitting by me kept looking at me like she thought it was my fault. "He's in an orchestra," I explained in a loud voice to her. "He's practicing for it. The teacher said nobody must stop him because he might get discouraged."

She only drew her face into a worse frown and said something that I couldn't hear.

It seemed like a long time until we got to our street and when I rang the bell and we started down the aisle to get off, everybody on the car gave us a mad look. And when the motorman opened the door for us to get out he said in a loud voice, "Thank God."

"Joe, you ought not to practice on the street car," I told him. "You ought to wait till you get out of doors where it

won't bother people."

Joey didn't say anything. He was holding the trumpet in his hand, resting from blowing.

As soon as we got home I hurried in to find my mother. She was in the living room sewing on the machine. "Joey brought the trumpet home," I told her. "Now you can hear him play on it."

Joe came in carrying the trumpet. "It would sound better out of doors," I said. "Don't you want to go outside and hear him?"

"No," my mother said. "In here will be all right. Can you really play something already, Jocy?"

Joey put the horn to his mouth and blew a loud blast. He looked like he was going to explode. My mother looked very nervous. "Mercy," she said.

"That was very good, Joey," she said after he had blown the six notes seven or eight times. "Maybe you better take it out in the yard now."

Joe went toward the back door blowing as he went. He sat down on the back steps and played his part over and over.

You could hear it very plain, even in the living room.

"The piece he is playing is called 'In the Alps,'" I told my mother. "The other children play in it too, but not as loud as Joe."

"I should hope not. Goodness," my mother said.

"Miss Fain said nobody should stop him from playing," I said. "But maybe he would stop himself if you would give him something."

"No," my mother said. "This is the first time he's ever

taken any interest in anything that went on at school, and I'm certainly not going to interfere with the way they're teaching him."

She ran the sewing machine for a few minutes with her forehead frowned up. Finally she stopped and said, "Helen, run close the back door please."

I went out and closed it behind me, and I stood there and watched Joe a minute. The noise didn't sound so loud in the open air, but the neighbors' chickens were running around in our back yard squawking as if they didn't like it much.

"Joe, why don't you stop and rest some now?" I asked him.

But he shook his head and kept on.

All afternoon Joey blew without stopping longer than just a few minutes to get his breath. But about five o'clock he laid down the trumpet on the porch and went out in the alley to watch a lot of bees that were crowding on an empty syrup can.

"Thank goodness," my mother said. She had come into the kitchen and was beginning to cook supper. She gave a long breath. "I never really appreciated quiet before. I never knew how wonderful it could be."

"Why don't you tell Joey he has to leave the trumpet at school after this?" I asked her. "Or why don't you tell Miss Fain you don't want him to play it any more?"

"No, we must think of Joey first. We can put up with it if it's really going to do him any good. But I do think they might have thought up something quieter for him to express himself on," she said partly to herself. "Soap carving

or something like that."

She kept on peeling potatoes and looking out the window at Joe who was poking the bees with a stick. After a while she said, "Helen, slip out there and get that thing and put it somewhere where he won't be likely to notice it. Then if he asks for it you can bring it out. I don't see how that could do any harm."

I tiptoed out and got the trumpet and hid it behind the living room sofa. I spread a magazine over it so if Joe happened to look back there he wouldn't see it.

When my mother called Joe to come get ready for supper he seemed to have forgotten about it. He walked past the place where it had been on the porch without looking for it. He had a bee sting on his leg and he seemed to be thinking more of that. "What do you expect, playing with bees?" my mother asked him, putting some soda on his sting.

After supper my father went in the living room and turned on the light and started looking around at the magazines on the table. "Has anybody seen my new seed catalogue?" he asked. "The last time I had it was in here, and now I can't find it anywhere."

"What kind of picture did it have on the front of it?" I asked him.

"A basket of petunias or something like that," he said, beginning to lift up the cushions on all the chairs. Just then he looked over behind the sofa. "Never mind, here it is," he said.

When he came up he had the catalogue in one hand

and the trumpet in the other. "What's this?" he said, looking very interested at it.

My mother gave a quick look at Joe who was on the floor reading the funnies. Then she shook her head and frowned at my father, but he didn't seem to notice it.

"It's remarkable the kind of toys they make nowadays," he said. "We never had things like this when I was a child. I bet you could really play something on it."

Just then Joey looked up from the newspaper, and my mother sat back and gave a quiet groan.

"That's Joey's trumpet," I told my father. "It's not really his, but he plays it in the toy orchestra at school."

"Let's see what you can do, Joe," said my father, giving it to him.

Joey took the trumpet and blew it. My father listened, looking pleased. When Joe stopped to get his breath my father said, "You know, he may have talent. He's got plenty of volume all right. If he had a real instrument and a few lessons it might not be long before he and Helen could be playing duets together."

"Oh no," my mother said, looking shocked. "I mean I think he's too young," she added quickly. "It would be too great a strain on his lungs."

"No it wouldn't," my father said. "There was a missionary and his wife came to the church once and they had nine children and each one of them played some kind of an instrument. There was a boy no bigger than Joe that played the tuba."

Joe had got his breath back and he began blowing again. My father listened a few minutes, still looking pleased and

then he sat down with his catalogue.

He started turning the pages. After a while he said, "That's fine, Joe," but Joey kept on blowing.

My father began to look not quite so pleased. He began to act nervous. "That's enough, Joe," he said in a louder voice.

"You're not supposed to stop him from playing," I told my father. "If you do he might never want to play again, the teacher said."

"That wouldn't be so terrible," my father said. "I don't think I'd mind that so much."

"Take it upstairs, Joe," my mother said. "Close your door and play it in your own room."

But when Joey had gone it wasn't much better. You could still hear the trumpet pretty loud. My father kept moving around in his chair and groaning as he tried to read. "How long is this going on?" he asked my mother finally. "How long do we have to put up with this?"

"It's your own fault," my mother told him. "You dragged out the horn from where Helen had hidden it and you asked him to play. You even wanted to give him lessons."

"That was before I had time to really listen," said my father. "I can see now that I was wrong."

"Well, you'll have to stand it the best you can," my mother said. "After all, what we sent him out there for was for them to interest him in something, and now that they've done it we can't very well make him stop. If we did he'd be right back where he started from."

"He'll burst a blood vessel if he keeps that up," my father said.

Just then the trumpet gave a funny squawk and stopped. We all waited, holding our breaths, but it didn't start again.

"Maybe he's already done it," I said.

"Don't be silly," said my mother. But she looked a little anxious. When the quiet had lasted several minutes she said, "Helen, run upstairs and get my mending basket and while you're there look in and see what Joey's doing."

I hurried upstairs and went into Joe's room. He was standing there blowing into the trumpet as hard as he could, but no sound was coming out.

"What happened, Joe?" I asked him, but he didn't answer me. I stood there and watched him a few minutes.

"Now you've done it," I said. "You've ruined Miss Fain's trumpet."

Joe took it out of his mouth. "No I haven't," he said. But he didn't try to blow it any more.

"You played it too much, that's why," I told him. "You wore it out from too much blowing."

He stood there looking at the broken trumpet. I had never seen him look like that but one other time, and that was when he dropped a whole ice cream cone on the sidewalk.

But when he saw I was watching him he began to kick the leg of the bed and stick out his hip a little. "I don't care," he said.

I thought Miss Fain might be mad about what had happened, but after all she turned out not to be. When we took back the trumpet and I told her my father would pay for another one she looked kind at Joe and she said she

wouldn't think of such a thing. It had been an accident, she said, and it was only a ten cent store trumpet.

"I had decided to ask Joe to do something else anyway," she said. "The little girl that jingled the bells has the measles, and if Joe will take her place that would help us so much. The trumpet part was almost too strong for this little orchestra."

When she said that the teachers looked happy and so did Miss Ridings and the children. Everybody seemed to feel good about it except Joe, and he acted the way he had before he had learned to play the trumpet. He just sat at the table by himself, and no matter what they put by him he wouldn't express himself on it.

When Miss Fain gave him the bells to ring in the orchestra he did ring them once or twice with an unsatisfied expression; then he laid them down and wouldn't ring them any more.

The last day of school the parents came and Miss Ridings took my mother aside and talked to her about Joe.

"Mrs. Marsden, I don't want you to feel that we've failed with Joe," she said. "You may be disappointed because he hasn't produced a visible expression of his inner self like so many of the children have, but we feel that he has shown us this summer that he has something very powerful in him waiting to be developed. We couldn't give it full rein here because some of the professors that had classes near-by objected to the noise, but at least we, or rather Miss Fain, uncovered it. When he had that trumpet he was a different child. And this is what I think

you should do. Get him some simple instrument this winter like a cornet and let him understand that he is free to express himself as he will. Then bring him back to us next year and we will try to finish what we have begun."

"But music lessons are so . . ." my mother began. Miss Ridings looked shocked. "Oh no, I don't mean he should be taught in the conventional way," she said. "For a child of Joe's temperament that would be fatal. The results are unimportant. What he produces may not be music in the usual sense of the word, but it will be music to Joe. In the modern school we don't impose adult standards on the child. It will be his own expression, free and unrestrained. Do you understand?"

My mother looked sort of pale. "We'll see," she said. "We'll think it over. I'll have to speak to his father."

That night after Joe had gone to bed my mother told my father what Miss Ridings had said.

My father was writing down a list of plants out of his seed catalogue, and talking to himself about them. But when my mother had told him twice he put down his pencil and listened.

"I certainly want to do what's best for Joe," my mother said. "But with winter coming and all of us shut up in the house like we will be, when I think of it I believe I'd almost rather for him to stay like he is now than to have to go through with it."

My father sat there looking thoughtful. After a while he said, "You know, I think the whole thing's useless."

"I simply don't believe I could live through it," my mother said.

"The more I think of it the clearer I can see that we've had the wrong idea about Joe all the time," said my father. "You take nature." He looked at the seed catalogue. "You take plant life. There's no use trying to change it. You could waste a whole lifetime trying to make a bush bean into a pole bean. It just can't be done."

"You think we ought to leave him alone, then?" my mother said, looking doubtful.

"I certainly do," my father said. "I think he'll turn out however he's going to anyway no matter what we do."

He picked up his pencil and began to turn the pages of the seed catalogue. "Let's see." He began to read in a kind of a mutter. "Attractive medium long roots with a broad shoulder gradually tapering downward. The skin is light in color and quite smooth. The flesh is . . ." as he read he began to look dreamier and dreamier.

My mother sat there not listening, still with a worried expression.

"You know what I'm going to do next spring?" my father asked her. "I'm going to plow up that empty lot back of the house and plant it in early corn and tomatoes. I'll put out several hills of summer squash, and if I have any ground left I'll sow some big sweet peppers. That way we won't have to buy a vegetable from June to October. If I live and nothing happens next year I'm going to have a real garden!"

THE END

